

Murphy Wins Passage of Provision to Improve Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence

Late last night, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) garnered a victory for victims of domestic violence with passage of the Murphy-Reichert amendment to the Commerce-Justice-Science (CJS) appropriations bill to improve the training of judges and court personnel who handle domestic violence cases. The amendment passed 405-35.

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WASHINGTON, DC – Late last night, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) garnered a victory for victims of domestic violence with passage of the Murphy-Reichert amendment to the Commerce-Justice-Science (CJS) appropriations bill to improve the training of judges and court personnel who handle domestic violence cases. The amendment passed 405-35.

"Victims of domestic violence require, and are entitled to, special assistance. Judges and court personnel need specialized training to deal with victims in a way that both preserves justice and addresses the severe trauma associated with these crimes. The time is now to make an effort to curb domestic violence – not just for the victims of these horrific crimes, but for the millions of children exposed to domestic violence as well," said Murphy.

Murphy teamed up with Congressman Dave Reichert, a Republican from Washington State, to push the amendment which adds \$5 million to fully fund the judicial training program that was included in the recently reauthorized Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The Court Improvement Program was signed into law early last year as a part of VAWA but has not yet been funded.

Nearly 25% of women report having been assaulted or raped by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime. As a result, domestic violence cases are a large and rising portion of the caseload in state courts. However, many courts do not understand how their actions and timelines can affect victim and child safety. Murphy's amendment would fund training for judges and other court personnel on how to properly identify and resolve the often complex issues involved in cases of domestic and sexual violence, as well as teen dating violence and stalking. It would also provide training on best practices for responding to these types of cases and creating specialized courts and dockets to deal with them.

Waterbury, Connecticut is home to one of the four domestic violence court dockets in Connecticut. These cases are managed in a specialized manner that includes law enforcement, prosecutors, Family Services, probation officers, and domestic violence advocates in the case review process.

"What makes the Waterbury operation so outstanding is the vertical case management model that should serve as an example to the rest of the country. Domestic violence can occur anywhere, and all courts should follow Waterbury's example in handling these cases," said Murphy.

The desperate need for trained judges and court personnel was brought into light tragically in the recent case of Yvette Cade. On the morning of October 10, 2005, Yvette Cade was doused with gasoline and set on fire by her estranged husband while at work in the suburbs of Washington, DC. She had had a protection order against him but a judge had dismissed her protection order three weeks before this incident. This judge had also likened victims of domestic violence to buses that come along all the time. Cade's husband was recently sent to prison for attempted murder.

The CJS bill also includes funding for projects that Murphy requested. The following projects may receive funding once the Senate passes their CJS appropriations bill, the two bills are reconciled in a conference, and the President signs the bill.

- City of New Britain - \$450,000 for the Interoperable Public Safety System, which allows public safety field staff to fully participate in the regional mobile data network using mobile computers and handheld computers.

- Klingberg Family Centers - \$400,000 to help the Klingberg Family Centers provide at-risk youth programs, technology enhancements, quality assurance and outcomes measurement, and staff training and development.

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