



# Advocacy Update

Sent December 12, 2012

## **End Violence Against Women**

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was a crucial step toward addressing the issue of domestic violence that is all too present in our countries, and across the globe. However, VAWA is much overdue for re-authorization, and its programs are at risk if Congress does not pass an updated version by the end of this lame duck session. Currently, there are two versions of VAWA being considered – the version passed by the Senate, which includes key new provisions to increase protection for LGBT, immigrant and Native American communities, and the version passed by the House of Representatives, which does not include any of these stipulations.

It is crucial that congressional leaders come together to reconcile their two versions of VAWA and pass the much-needed bill. Ending domestic violence has been a priority for WRJ for years – but we can't stop now. We must fight to pass VAWA and protect all of the vulnerable members of our communities.

## **Living Wage**

As we approach the fiscal cliff, old debates about the economy and the role of government in protecting the poor have resurfaced in important and startling ways. While many of these discussions are playing out at the federal level, there is an issue being considered by states that could hopefully address some of the rising concerns over poverty, homelessness and hunger: raising the minimum wage.

According to recent data, it is impossible in all 50 states to afford a modest two-bedroom rental while working 40 hours a week on minimum wage. Some states have already taken up the charge – Washington, Connecticut and Massachusetts have raised the minimum wage to \$9.04, \$8.25 and \$8.00, respectively. It is essential to support living wage campaigns in our home states, and to help enact federal legislation that would institute a national minimum wage that truly reflects the economic realities facing families across America.

## **Rights of the Disabled**

Last week, the United States Senate tragically failed to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The United States has long been a leader in inclusion, accessibility and the promotion of independence for people with disabilities. Last week, that commitment screeched to a halt. The Senate's failure to ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, or CRPD, undermines the U.S.' longstanding dedication to the equality of opportunity for those with disabilities.

The CRPD is based on the ideals of the Americans with Disabilities Act, intended to empower those with disabilities to be independent and productive citizens. It represents an international effort to bring the world closer to achieving the goals of equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities. This treaty affirms the right of people with disabilities to equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency.

It is time the United States reclaimed its position as a global leader in civil rights. We must recognize all people, including those with disabilities, as people first. This Chanukah, may we grow in holiness as we

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seek to brighten the lives of people with disabilities around the world. Let us, in Maccabean style, join a seemingly small band of freedom fighters against the larger foe of injustice.