



# Advocacy Update

Sent January 9, 2013

## **Failure to Act on Violence Against Women Act**

For the first time in recent memory, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was so politically polarized that it was left unpassed as the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress drew to a close last month. VAWA was set to be reauthorized in 2011, yet its passage grew increasingly partisan as the two chambers passed differing versions of the bill. In particular, the Senate's version contained increased protection for vulnerable members of immigrant, Native American and LGBT communities that the House did not include. Despite these differences, the two bills contained many important provisions in common, and would have continued to support and even expanded essential programs for victims of sexual assault and abuse across the country.

For anti-domestic violence advocates such as WRJ, this lack of passage is a true travesty. WRJ has fought against domestic violence for years, and will continue to do so in the new Congress. Women across the country are now left without vital services they need to ensure their safety and well-being. Act now: tell your members of Congress that it is crucial that they swiftly re-introduce and pass an inclusive VAWA.

## **National Defense Authorization Act: A Mixed Bag**

Last week, President Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act for 2013. The final version of the NDAA contains a discriminatory section that prevents the military from taking action against service members who discriminate against their LGBT colleagues. WRJ policy would oppose both of this provision. However, the NDAA wasn't all bad. It also contains a provision known as the "Shaheen Amendment," which was a major victory for reproductive rights supporters, including WRJ. The Shaheen Amendment closed a loophole in abortion access available to members of the military receiving their health coverage through TRICARE, the Department of Defense's insurance plan. Under existing TRICARE policies, abortions are not covered in cases of rape or incest – merely in cases of the life of the mother. The Shaheen Amendment rectifies this disparity and brings TRICARE policies in line with other governmental health insurance plans, and in line with WRJ policy.

For more about the passage of this bill, and how it connects to some of our most treasured Jewish values, read this RAC blog post about this issue.

## **Coming Up: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Roe v. Wade**

On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013, we will celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court decision Roe v. Wade. This essential case struck down many state laws restricting abortion, changing the landscape of reproductive health access for women in the U.S.