



— TOP TAKEAWAYS —

The Violence Against Women Act

While we all want to work to reduce violence against women, the Violence Against Women Act needs reform to make it more effective and accountable.

PROBLEM #1

VAWA programs aren't being evaluated for effectiveness in reducing intimate partner violence.

- Intimate partner crimes (and all violent crime rates) were falling prior to VAWA.
- Rates of violent crime overall have declined significantly more than have rates of domestic violence.
- VAWA programs have never undergone scientifically-rigorous evaluations to ensure they are achieving their intended results.

SOLUTION: *Authorize funding for scientifically rigorous evaluations of VAWA programs to determine whether these programs actually produce their intended effects.*

PROBLEM #2

VAWA leaves many victims without access to services.

- **The Department of Justice Inspector General** found that a significant amount of funds are not being spent on servicing victims.
- As the **National Research Council** reports, treatment is often “driven by ideology and stakeholder interests rather than by plausible theories and scientific evidence of fact.”

SOLUTIONS: *Refocus the law to:*

- *Include all victims rather than singling out specific groups for special protection based on gender, sexual orientation, or other group status.*
- *Incorporate strong auditing and accountability measures.*
- *Consolidate duplicated programs to ensure that VAWA funds are spent on services, not bureaucracy.*

PROBLEM #3

VAWA overlooks many proven causes of violence and can backfire on victims.

- There's a strong correlation between domestic and sexual violence and **substance abuse, psychological disorders** and single-parent homes—yet virtually no VAWA programs address these factors.
- The **Bureau of Justice** reported that, “Females living in households comprised of one female adult with children experienced intimate partner violence at a rate more than 10 times higher than households with married adults with children.”
- A **Harvard study** found the mandatory arrest policies funded by VAWA may lead to more intense levels of violence.

SOLUTION: *Return flexibility to states and localities so they might tailor programs to meet the needs of their particular communities, encouraging a more comprehensive approach to treating the complex causes of intimate partner violence.*

PROBLEM #4

VAWA currently ignores Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage, which also threaten the well-being of women and girls in America.

- There is no solid data on how many girls or women in the United States have been subject to FGM. Yet there is evidence that some communities are seeking to continue their native land's tradition of FGM here in America and transport their daughters to other countries for this procedure. We need to combat these practices.
- Child marriage, or marriage before 18, is legal in every US state. Child marriage is often forced marriage. Research by the nonprofit group Unchained found that “a quarter-million children as young as 12 were married in the US between 2000 and 2010—mostly girls wed to adult men.” VAWA should prioritize preventing these abusive relationships.

For more information, read IWF's policy focus, [The Violence Against Women Act](#), and this *Forbes* article, [Let's Prioritize Protecting Girls](#).