

National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of victims of domestic violence and in recognition of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. For far too long, domestic violence victims have been ignored, afraid to speak up, and scared of being stigmatized. Battered immigrant women have been particularly vulnerable to domestic violence due to their temporary immigration status or lack of status. These women often suffer in silence because they fear threats of deportation, fear being separated from their children, and are afraid to come out of the shadows.

We have made significant progress in both reducing incidents of domestic violence and in offering support to victims. Eighteen years ago, Vice President Biden led the bipartisan effort to enact the Violence Against Women Act. As we all know, VAWA has strengthened communities and provided critical, life-saving support to victims of domestic violence, including battered immigrant women.

Obamacare expands access to critical domestic violence services. Under Obamacare, health insurers must provide women with access to domestic violence screening and counseling services without any cost-sharing and they cannot charge higher premiums to victims of domestic violence. This eliminates cost as a barrier to accessing these important services.

Nonprofit organizations are also doing inspiring work to aid victims of domestic violence. One such organization is Second Chance Employment Services. I want to recognize the extraordinary work done by this organization, and its founder Dr. Ludy Green. SCES offers survivors of domestic violence counseling and individualized job training services. SCES provides these women with both emotional support and the resources needed for financial security.

Despite all of these efforts, we still have a long way to go. Every day, three women in the United States die as a result of domestic violence. We must do everything we can to combat these unconscionable acts and support victims of this horrible crime. As the President noted in his

Proclamation in honor of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month of 2012, "Let us renew our efforts to support victims of domestic violence in their time of greatest need, and to realize an America where no one lives in fear because they feel unsafe in their own home."

In recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we all must recommit to continuing to fight for all survivors of domestic violence. We must all work together to reauthorize VAWA before the end of this Congress and ensure that we expand rather than erode protections for all victims of domestic violence. I urge my Republican colleagues to pass the bipartisan Senate bill, which passed the Senate on April 26 by a more than 2 - 1 vote, so that we can expand rather than roll back protections for victims of domestic violence.