

**DEADLINE: March 17, 2016**

# **SUPPORT VICTIMS OF CRIME WITHOUT SPENDING TAX DOLLARS**

*Help Ensure Increased Outputs from the Crime Victims Fund*

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in signing the letter below to Appropriations Committee Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Chairman Culberson, and Ranking Member Honda to encourage the House Appropriations CJS Subcommittee to set the Crime Victims Fund cap in FY 2017 to at least \$2.7 billion. This funding level will ensure enhanced services to victims of crime throughout the country.

Since 1984, the Victims of Crime Act has provided federal grants to provide essential, often life-saving services for crime victims. The Crime Victims Fund is **not financed by taxpayer dollars** but by fines, forfeitures, and other penalties paid by federal criminal offenders. By statute, the Fund is dedicated solely to supporting victim services. Because these non-tax dollars have already been collected and deposited into the Fund, **raising the cap does not add to the national deficit or debt.**

Every year, state VOCA victim assistance grants provide vital, direct assistance that supports thousands of public and community-based agencies nationwide in providing services to more than 3.4 million victims of assault, robbery, gang violence, intoxicated drivers, fraud, elder abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, stalking, and many other crimes. Additionally, VOCA supports victim assistance for those involved in the federal criminal justice system, including survivors of terrorist acts. VOCA also helps victims with financial assistance for medical care, mental health counseling, lost wages, and funeral and burial costs through VOCA victim compensation grants.

In addition to requesting \$2.7 billion VOCA cap, the letter requests that the amounts in the Crime Victims Fund be used solely for programs authorized under the VOCA statute. The FY 2016 appropriations bill used \$389 million from the Crime Victims Fund for non-VOCA authorized programs, thereby undermining the statute's express requirement that the Fund be used solely for VOCA programs, the Fund's long-term viability and Congress's longstanding commitment to crime victims.

If you would like to join me in signing the below letter or if you have any questions, please contact Kristina Solberg in Rep. Jim Costa's office at [kristina.solberg@mail.house.gov](mailto:kristina.solberg@mail.house.gov) or 5-3341 or Blair Bjellos in Rep. Ted Poe's office at [blair.bjellos@mail.house.gov](mailto:blair.bjellos@mail.house.gov) or 5-6565. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

JIM COSTA

TED POE

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

March 23, 2016

The Honorable Hal Rogers  
Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations  
H-305, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Culberson  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
H-309, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Honda  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
1016 Longworth HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Culberson, and Ranking Member Honda:

We greatly appreciate your efforts to help crime victims by supporting the Crime Victims Fund and Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) programs. We are enormously grateful for your efforts to increase the cap on the Crime Victims Fund by setting the cap at \$2.361 billion for Fiscal Year 2015 and \$3.042 billion for Fiscal Year 2016. These increases represent a historic investment in meeting the crucial needs of victims of all types of crime.

We request that the Crime Victims Fund cap for Fiscal Year 2017 be set at least at \$2.7 billion, without any carve outs or transfers to programs not authorized under the VOCA statute.

With the elimination of any and all transfers out of the Fund for non-VOCA purposes, including the \$389 million transferred as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, a \$2.7 billion cap should sustain and enhance funding for state VOCA assistance grants that support the vast majority of direct crime victim assistance services.

Deposits into the Fund have continued at an unprecedented rate. We expect that deposits in Fiscal Year 2016 will again exceed the annual cap, even at the amount we are requesting. This means that despite the removal of \$1.5 billion from the Fund's balance in last year's Budget Agreement, it will continue to be a viable, sustainable, and long-term source to support VOCA-authorized crime victim services.

As you know, since 1984, the Victims of Crime Act has provided federal grants to provide essential, often life-saving services for crime victims. The Crime Victims Fund is ***not financed by taxpayer dollars*** but by fines, forfeitures, and other penalties paid by federal criminal offenders. By statute, the Fund is dedicated solely to supporting victim services. Because these non-tax dollars have already been collected and deposited into the Fund, raising the cap does not add to the national deficit or debt.

Every year, state VOCA victim assistance grants provide vital, direct assistance that supports thousands of public and community-based agencies nationwide in providing services to more

than 3.7 million victims of assault, murder, robbery, gang violence, intoxicated drivers, fraud, elder abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, stalking, and many other crimes. Additionally, VOCA supports victim assistance for those involved in the federal criminal justice system, including survivors of terrorist acts. VOCA also helps victims with financial assistance for medical care, mental health counseling, lost wages, and funeral and burial costs through VOCA victim compensation grants.

Maintaining the VOCA funding level is essential to responsible and efficient management of victim service programs. Since VOCA funding increased, states have been engaged in long-term planning to best meet victims' needs in their respective jurisdictions by conducting needs assessments, strategic planning, surveys, and discussions with stakeholder groups. State VOCA assistance programs have been committed to using the increased funding as "catch-up" to existing programs, outreach to additional programs that had not previously received VOCA support, an increase in support for victim advocates, and enhanced training and infrastructure and technology improvements. Adopting a policy of setting the annual VOCA cap at least at the average of the last three-year deposits will facilitate long-term planning and stability in support of victim services.

We request that the amounts in the Crime Victims Fund be used solely for programs authorized under the VOCA statute. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 used \$389 million from the Crime Victims Fund for non-VOCA authorized programs, thereby undermining the statute's express requirement that the Fund be used solely for VOCA programs, the Fund's long-term viability, and Congress's longstanding commitment to crime victims. Furthermore, we would appreciate your continued support of national crime victims' services, like crime victims hotlines, with available resources. We would also like to highlight that VOCA funding is authorized to be used for child abuse victim services such as forensic interviews and forensic exams conducted in a multidisciplinary setting such as children's advocacy centers as well as court appointed special advocate programs.

We again express our great appreciation to the Committee for its leadership and ongoing support for important services to crime victims throughout our Nation. Your consideration of our request will help ensure the long-term continuity of essential crime victim assistance services.

Sincerely,