



For Immediate Release

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YWCA USA and Women's Policy Inc. Host Domestic Violence Briefing

Budget Woes Nationwide put Domestic Violence Programs at Risk

Washington DC, October 27, 2011 - The YWCA USA partnered with Women's Policy Inc. to host a Capitol Hill briefing on domestic violence to mark the YWCA's *Week Without Violence*.

"As the largest provider of battered women's shelters and domestic violence services in the nation, the YWCA has worked tirelessly to protect funding that is critical to these programs at a time when demand is greater than ever. Our Week Without Violence™ seeks to raise awareness about this issue, and that is an extremely important step in our efforts to end this horror that hurts everyone," stated Gloria Lau, CEO of the YWCA USA.

The briefing, held on October 20th, generated lively conversation among Congressional policy-makers and staff members, especially in the aftermath of the controversial release of 18 alleged batterers in Topeka, Kansas. The Topeka Kansas City Council repealed the city's domestic abuse law because some argued the cost of prosecuting domestic violence cases was just too high. Outrage was expressed by many groups across the country, and as a result the District Attorney agreed to begin prosecuting the city's misdemeanors on a case by case basis.

At the briefing, similar stories were discussed. Christie DeGrendele, Executive Director of YWCA Sweetwater County, spoke to how the current economic climate has impacted services to domestic violence victims in her community. "Budget cuts have removed staff advocates –essentially removing critical support for the victims. Survivors of domestic violence also need good paying jobs and wrap around services such as child care, transportation to move from a life of violence to a life free of violence," said DeGrendele.

Virginia's Newport News Police Chief Jim Fox stated, "I take this very seriously. I see approximately 60 assaults every week—45 of those cases are directly connected to domestic violence. As a community, we have to come together to push legislators to fund domestic violence programs, not scale them back."

Echoing Ms. DeGrendele and Chief Fox, Congresswoman Donna Edwards (D-MD) told the audience, "domestic violence is an important conversation we need to have in every community. We have to fight like crazy to protect funding so that we don't lose the ground we gained over the last 20 years."

The YWCA will press to keep domestic violence programs a priority, and reinforce to Congressional leaders the importance of continuing to fund these programs nationwide.

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About the YWCA USA

The YWCA USA is one of the oldest and largest women's organizations in the nation with the mission of eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. In the U.S., the YWCA serves over 2 million women, girls and their families. Globally, the YWCA USA is a member of the World YWCA, which has affiliates in 122 countries that serve 25 million women and girls worldwide.

Launched as a grassroots initiative when it began in 1995, the YWCA's *Week Without Violence* is now a global campaign involving hundreds of communities and over 50 countries. The campaign consists of events that focus attention on the devastating impact of violence in communities including domestic violence. Domestic violence will affect one of every four women during her lifetime, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.