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YWCA USA Announces Top National Legislative Priorities for the 113th Congress

Leading Women's Organization to Focus on Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Immigration Reform and a Fair Budget

Washington, D.C. — As one of the leading organizations dedicated to empowering women and eliminating racism, the [YWCA USA](#) has selected its top three advocacy priorities for the 113th Congress. Today, the YWCA is sending a [letter](#) outlining the top three national advocacy priorities to the U.S. House and Senate, and to the White House.

The YWCA, which serves more than 2 million women, children and families nationwide in more than 1,300 locations across the U.S., will focus its national advocacy efforts on legislation to:

- 1. Reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)**
- 2. Enact National Immigration Reform**
- 3. Support a Fair Budget that Protects Women and Families***

**see detailed legislative platform on Page 2*

With over 230 YWCAs nationwide, the YWCA recently surveyed its local associations about the most pressing issues they would like policymakers to address. Specifically, local leaders were asked about their top legislative concerns regarding women's health and safety, women's economic empowerment and racial justice – the three broad issue areas in which the YWCA offers programs. Survey respondents included YWCA association executive directors, program directors, advocacy specialists and staff.

"Strategically identifying key legislative priorities for the upcoming year allows the YWCA to more effectively advocate around the issues of economic empowerment, comprehensive immigration reform and freedom from violence that are before our new Congress," said [Dara Richardson-Heron, MD, CEO of the YWCA USA](#). "There is tremendous power to be gained by collectively mobilizing around a common YWCA issue platform. The legislative priorities identified are vitally important to and potentially life-changing for the millions of women, children and families who count on our local associations and National office to advocate on their behalf," she added.

"We are pleased that the new Congress has already demonstrated a reinvigorated commitment to pass vital pieces of legislation like National Immigration Reform and VAWA, which will directly address hardships faced by women and families across the country," said [Desiree Hoffman, Director of Advocacy and Policy at the YWCA USA](#). Hoffman added, "Our goal is to ensure that legislators know the real impact of this legislation on the communities we serve."

Here is the [YWCA letter](#) outlining the top three national advocacy priorities to the U.S. House, Senate and the White House. The White House will also be encouraged to cover these issues in the President's State of the Union Address on **February 12**.

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YWCA's Top Three Legislative Priorities for the 113th Congress:

1. Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA): As the largest provider of domestic violence shelters in the U.S., serving over half a million women each year, the YWCA is deeply committed to initiatives that promote safety and security for women and families. YWCA anti-violence programs include: emergency shelters; 24-hour hotlines; transitional and supportive housing for victims of violence; non-residential counseling and therapy; sexual assault response teams, and court advocacy and case management. In ranking the top three women's health and safety issue areas, local associations indicated that the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is their top legislative priority for the 113th Congress. *The YWCA USA is calling for the swift and immediate passage of the reintroduced VAWA bill, S.47.*

2. National Immigration Reform: Historically, the YWCA has advocated for racial justice and for equitable and just laws in communities across the country. Local associations nationwide provide racial justice programs to more than 330,000 clients annually, including: assisting immigrant victims of violence in navigating the justice system; providing racial justice training to the community; working with victims of human and sexual trafficking; voter education and mobilization; affirmative action, and working to end hate crimes. *YWCA's across the country are deeply committed to advocating for a common sense immigration process that keeps families together here in the U.S., provides adequate protections for immigration victims of sexual violence and trafficking and that creates a roadmap for citizenship for the 11 million aspiring to be citizens.*

3. A Fair Budget that Protects Women and Families: The YWCA is greatly invested in programs and legislation that foster opportunities for women to achieve economic and financial security and stability. Many YWCAs nationwide that help women pursue these goals, rely, at least in part, on federal funding to ensure the sustainability of their programming. Key funding streams like the Child Care Development Block Grant (CDBG), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Violence Against Women Act, allow local associations to serve countless women and families. With policymakers in Washington D.C. focused on cutting spending, including deficit reduction and the sequester, the YWCA is concerned that cuts to non-defense discretionary spending and benefit and eligibility changes to of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security would negatively impact the women and families we serve.

About the YWCA USA

The YWCA is the voice for every woman. For more than 150 years, the YWCA has spoken out and taken action on behalf of women and girls. The YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. Over 2 million people participate each year in YWCA programs at more than 1,300 locations across the U.S.

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