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**NEWS RELEASE**

**NEWS CONFERENCE HELD TO PROMOTE REAUTHORIZATION  
OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT**

Domestic violence touches every one of us. It fills emergency rooms and morgues, keeps employees from being able to work, terrorizes children and interferes with their ability to learn and thrive. These acts contribute to crime on our streets and cause lasting harm to families and communities. Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking unfortunately occur thousands of times every day in America. These acts of violence must never be tolerated or ignored. Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom hosted a discussion last week featuring U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar. The Senator, along with Dakota County **Sheriff Dave Bellows**, Hastings Police **Chief Paul Schnell**, Minnesota Coalition For Battered Women (MCBW) **Program Manager Bobbi Holtberg** and Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) **Director Donna Dunn** highlighted the need for the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

The VAWA, first enacted in 1994 and re-authorized in 2005, has made incredible inroads to reduce sexual and domestic violence in our nation. In times when state, county and local budgets are stressed we need the continuing support of our federal government through the reauthorization once again of this important Act to address these significant problems. Reauthorization of VAWA would enhance:

- National efforts to save lives and support victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking;
- Successes of current collaborative programs to address these serious problems;
- Judicial, law enforcement, and medical interventions, in such cases;
- Housing, workplace, and military protections for victims, in such cases;
- Youth services working in collaboration with schools, college campuses, and other local community organizations to protect victims of these crimes;
- Services for tribal victims of these crimes;
- Accountability for offenders of these crimes; and
- Prevention programs aimed at stopping these crimes before they ever occur.

We must continue to do all we can as a society to hold accountable the perpetrators, protect the victims and work to prevent these devastating crimes. Sheriff Bellows and Chief Schnell spoke of eliminating the cycle of violence. For decades, law enforcement has seen generation after generation affected by calls related to family violence. Without trauma services or positive role models for the children, these young people often grow up mimicking the violence they have witnessed. Funding to support technology, risk assessments and programming to change the behaviour is necessary to end this cycle of violence.

Others involved in the discussion were Mendota Heights Mayor Sandra Krebsbach, Council Member Mike Povolny and Chief Mike Aschenbrener; Inver Grove Heights Mayor George Tourville; West St. Paul Mayor John Zannmiller and Chief Bud Shaver; South St. Paul Chief Dan Vujovich; Dakota County Community Services Director Kelly Harder; and 360 Communities CEO and President Sal Mondelli, Director of Violence Prevention Ann Sheridan, and Coordinators for the Lewis House in Eagan, Callie Olson, and in Hastings, Ann Avril.

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MCBW provides leadership, resources and assistance to members of the criminal justice system to respond to domestic violence. To learn more, go to [www.mcbw.org](http://www.mcbw.org). MNCASA assists local programs to provide advocacy and prevention programming and to affect public perception and policy related to sexual assault. To learn more, go to [www.mncasa.org](http://www.mncasa.org).

For a copy of the statements and resources provided, right click on

- [Minnesota Criminal Justice System Collaborative](#)
- [VAWA Reauthorization Fact Sheet](#)
- [VAWA Safeguards Fact Sheet \(use to dispel myths about VAWA\)](#)
- [FY 13 Appropriations Fact Sheet](#)
- [Federal Appropriations Chart](#)
- [Domestic and Sexual Violence Fact Sheet](#)

Please join County Attorney James Backstrom, Sheriff Dave Bellows, other supporters and Senator Amy Klobuchar in supporting the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

If you have questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4440.