

YOUR NAME
YOUR ADDRESS
CITY, STATE, ZIP

DATE

NAME OF MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
XXX House Office Building
Washington, DC 200XX

Dear Representative NAME:

As a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and a constituent of your district, I write to you today urge your support for the reauthorization the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA was originally enacted in 1994 to address domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The legislation was reauthorized by Congress in 2000, 2005, and 2013. The 2013 reauthorization included important provisions addressing jurisdictional gaps that prevented tribal prosecutors from holding perpetrators accountable when they assaulted American Indian women on tribal lands. The 2013 reauthorization expired in February 2019 and has not yet been reauthorized by Congress.

VAWA is a critical piece of legislation for Indian Country because Native women face alarming rates of domestic violence and sexual assault. A 2016 study by the National Institute of Justice found that 84.3 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native women experience violence in their lifetime; 56.1 percent experience sexual violence; and 55.5 percent experience physical violence by an intimate partner. At the same time, Native women are also less likely to have access to the services they need in their time of crisis. These statistics are staggering, and as Americans, they should concern each and every one of us.

By reauthorizing VAWA, Congress can create jurisdictional certainty and ensure that crimes against American Indian women do not go unpunished. Without VAWA, when violence is committed against Native women on tribal lands, tribes lack the authority to prosecute the perpetrator. Because most violence against Native women is committed by non-Indians, this means that these crimes will continue without consequence. With your support, we can fix this hole in our justice system.

As your constituent, I urge you to support the reauthorization of VAWA with tribal provisions included. We must ensure that there are robust legal protections in place to keep American Indian women safe. Thank you for your ongoing support for Indian Country.

Sincerely,

NAME

cc: Cherokee Nation