



Representative Beth Kerttula

House Minority Leader

Sponsor Statement

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 48

Urging the United States Congress to pass the Crime Victims Fund Preservation Act.

Created by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) in 1984, the Crime Victims Fund provides critical funding for victim compensation and often life-saving direct services. Victim assistance programs, funded through state VOCA grants, help over four million crime victims every year, including victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse and drunk driving, as well as family members of homicide victims. The Crime Victims Fund is financed entirely from a collection of criminal fines, forfeitures and special assessments, not taxpayer revenues. To ensure a stable level of program funding from a fund dependent on fluctuating deposits, Congress began capping annual obligations that can be made from the Fund starting in 2000. Under the VOCA statutory formula, state assistance grants receive whatever amount remains after all the other VOCA programs are funded. Unless the cap is high enough, increases in other VOCA programs and new costs reduce the amount available for state victim assistance grants. Despite unprecedented deposits into the Crime Victims Fund, state VOCA victim assistance grants were cut significantly between 2006 and 2008, creating a gap of at least \$106 million between funding requests and funds available.

The Crime Victims Fund Preservation Act would preserve and enhance federal assistance to crime victims under the Victims of Crime Act. A new \$705 million VOCA cap in 2010 will restore stable VOCA assistance funding and take a small first step in meeting the growing needs of victims. The direct services supported by VOCA grants include crisis intervention and counseling, emergency shelters, hotlines, legal advocacy and assistance in participating in the criminal justice system. Reduced funding has meant hundreds of thousands fewer crime victims received services in 2008 than the previous year. In Alaska, there was an \$189,000 reduction from 2006 to 2008 in victim assistance grants.

The impact of VOCA assistance grant cuts is devastating to those who, through no fault of their own, have become victims of the most vicious crimes. Without this funding and the direct services it supports, crime victims go without advocacy, medical, mental health, and/or legal services, which are crucial in a victim's healing process. I appreciate your consideration of House Joint Resolution No. 48.