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Time to Defund Feminist Pork — the Hate-Men Law

If Congress is looking for a way to return to principles of limited government and reduced federal spending, or to help finance the expenses of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita without raising taxes, a good place to start would be to reject the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) sponsored by Senator Joe Biden (D-DE). It's a political mystery why Republicans continue to put a billion dollars a year of taxpayers' money into the hands of radical feminists who use it to preach their anti-marriage and anti-male ideology, to promote divorce, to corrupt the family court system, and to engage in anti-family political advocacy.

Accountability is supposed to be the watchword of the Bush Administration, but there's been no accountability or oversight for VAWA's ten years of spending many billions of dollars. There is no evidence that VAWA has benefited anyone except the radical feminists on its payroll. The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on VAWA in mid-July, but no critic of VAWA was permitted to speak.

VAWA was first passed in 1994 after the feminists floated such bogus statistics as "a woman is beaten every 15 seconds" and "80% of fathers who seek custody of their children fit the profile of a batterer." Remember the Super Bowl Hoax, the ridiculous claim that "the biggest day of the year for violence against women" is Super Bowl Sunday (an assertion conclusively refuted by the scholarly research of Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers)?

VAWA was passed when the Democrats controlled both Houses of Congress and was signed by Bill Clinton in 1994. VAWA is the biggest legislative achievement of NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund (which has since changed its name to Legal Momentum). This tax-exempt organization brags on its website that it "was central to the crafting and passage of VAWA 1994 and [its first reauthorization in] 2000 [and] we are currently hard at work to secure reauthorization and full funding for VAWA 2005."

VAWA assumes fluid definitions of domestic violence that blur the difference between violent action and run-of-the-mill marital tiffs and arguments. Definitions of abuse can even include minor insults and irritations that occur in most marriages or relationships.

A woman seeking help from a VAWA-funded center is not offered any options except to leave her husband, divorce him, accuse him of being a criminal, and have her sons targeted as suspects in future crimes. VAWA ideology rejects joint counseling, reconciliation, and saving marriages.

VAWA refuses to recognize that alcohol and illegal drugs are a cause of domestic violence, a peculiar assumption contrary to all human experience. Numerous studies demonstrate a high correlation between domestic violence and alcohol or drug abuse.

VAWA forces Soviet-style psychological re-education on men and teenage boys. The accused men are not given treatment for real problems, but are assigned to classes where feminists teach shame and guilt because of a vast male conspiracy to subjugate women.

VAWA funds the re-education of judges and law enforcement personnel to teach them feminist stereotypes about male abusers and female victims, how to game the system to empower women, and how to ride roughshod over the constitutional rights of men.

VAWA encourages women to make false allegations and then petition for full child custody and a denial of fathers' rights to see their own children. VAWA promotes the unrestrained use of restraining orders, which family courts issue on the woman's say-so.

VAWA-funded centers engage in political advocacy for feminist legislation such as the "must-arrest" laws even if there is no sign of violence and even if the woman doesn't want the man arrested, and the "no drop" laws which mean the government must prosecute the man even if the woman doesn't want him prosecuted.

It's time to stop VAWA from spending any more taxpayers' money to promote family dissolution and fatherless children.

VAWA Based on Radical Feminist Ideology

The groundwork for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was laid by Gloria Steinem's nonsense, such as "The patriarchy requires violence or the subliminal threat of violence in order to maintain itself" and Andrea Dworkin's ti-

rades of hate such as, “Under patriarchy, every woman’s son is her betrayer and also the inevitable rapist or exploiter of another woman.”

During the Clinton Administration, the feminists parlayed their hysteria that domestic violence is a *national epidemic* into the 1994 passage of the Violence Against Women Act. It quickly became a gigantic gravy train of taxpayers’ money — known as feminist pork — that provided jobs for radical feminists and empowered them to pursue their goals at our expense.

We have always had laws against assault and battery in all 50 states, but that doesn’t satisfy the feminists. Feminist ideology teaches that domestic violence threatens every woman because of our alleged patriarchal society and is of epidemic proportions that demand an expensive *federal* remedy.

Feminist ideology teaches that domestic violence is not a matter of the misbehavior of *some* men who may be bad individuals or drunks or psychologically troubled, but that *all* men share the blame for domestic violence because they benefit from a system that empowers men and keeps women subservient. Feminists staged public tantrums this year against the president of Harvard University because he dared to discuss math-aptitude differences between men and women. But VAWA is based on the unscientific notion that all men are potentially if not actually abusive, and that all women are victims or in danger of becoming victims.

Since 1994, VAWA has dished out massive grant money that validated a feminist network of organizations called the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The following passage, taken from the website of the Arizona chapter, is typical of VAWA ideology:

“USING MALE PRIVILEGE. As long as we as a culture accept the principle and privilege of male dominance, men will continue to be abusive. As long as we as a culture accept and tolerate violence against women, men will continue to be abusive. . . . All men benefit from the violence of batterers. There is no man who has not enjoyed the male privilege resulting from male domination reinforced by the use of physical violence. . . . All women suffer as a consequence of men’s violence. Battering by individual men keeps all women in line. While not every woman has experienced violence, there is no woman in this society who has not feared it, restricting her activities and her freedom to avoid it. Women are always watchful knowing that they may be the arbitrary victims of male violence.”

Your tax dollars paid for a 1993 National Woman Abuse Prevention Project pamphlet which stated that “society has accepted the use of violence by men to control women’s behavior.”

Not satisfied with getting a billion dollars a year from the U.S. Treasury, 67 feminist and liberal organizations supported

a lawsuit to try to get private allegations of domestic abuse heard in *federal* courts so they could collect civil damages against men and institutions with deep pockets. Fortunately, the Supreme Court, in *Brzonkala v. Morrison* (2000), declared unconstitutional VAWA’s section that might have permitted that additional mischief.

However, VAWA’s billions of dollars continue to finance the domestic-violence industry, and there is a deafening silence from conservatives who pretend to be guardians against federal takeovers of problems that are none of the federal government’s business. Local crimes and marital disputes should not be subjects of federal law or spending. Shame on Members of Congress who lack the courage to stand up to feminist outrages.

Feminists have always made divorce a major component of women’s liberation and political freedom and they brag about their role in passing the unilateral divorce laws that swept the country during the 1970s. When I was debating the proposed Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s, feminists were already propagating the lie that marriage is an inherently abusive institution that makes wives second-class citizens. Feminist dominance in the universities assures that college textbooks portray marriage as bleak and dreary for women. Assigned readings are preoccupied with domestic violence, battering, abuse, marital rape, and divorce.

For three decades, feminists have toyed with the question that Maureen Dowd chose as the title of her new book, *Are Men Necessary?* That’s just the latest version of Gloria Steinem’s famous line, “A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.” Currently, the media are publicizing a ridiculous book called *Raising Boys Without Men: How Maverick Moms Are Creating the Next Generation of Exceptional Men* by Peggy Drexler.

The famous 1965 Daniel Patrick Moynihan report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, warned that the rise in single-mother families was not a harmless lifestyle choice, but was unraveling “the basic socializing unit” and causing high rates of delinquency, joblessness, school failure and male alienation.

Moynihan was bitterly attacked for speaking what is now universally recognized as the awful truth. Kay S. Hymowitz, in the Manhattan Institute’s August *City Journal* writes that Moynihan’s critics romanticized female-headed families as a *good* thing. She described how the feminists, who were fixated on notions of patriarchal oppression, claimed that criticism of mother-headed households was really an effort to deny women their independence, their sexuality, or both.

VAWA gives the radical feminists a billion dollars a year to pursue their anti-marriage, pro-divorce anti-male activism and to expand mother-headed households even further into our society.

What Is Domestic Violence?

Most people think of domestic violence as the sad or tragic cases of men beating up women. Assault and battery are obviously crimes that should be prosecuted and punished. But domestic violence doesn't just mean criminal conduct. The feminists have expanded the definition of domestic violence to include an endless variety of perfectly legal actions that are made punishable because of *who* commits them.

VAWA's gender-specific title is pejorative and sex-discriminatory: the Violence Against Women Act. VAWA means violence *by men against women*. VAWA does not include violence by women against women. VAWA's funds are routinely denied to male victims of domestic violence. For example, the Texas VAWA grant application makes its sexist goal specific: "Grant funds may not be used for the following: Services for programs that focus on children and/or men."

Professor Martin Fiebert of California State University at Long Beach compiled a bibliography of 170 scholarly investigations, 134 empirical studies and 36 analyses which demonstrate that women are almost as physically abusive toward their partners as men. Studies by the leading domestic violence researchers found that half of all couple violence is mutual, and when only one partner is physically abusive, it is as likely to be initiated by the woman as the man.

The term domestic *violence* has morphed into domestic *abuse*, a far broader term. Domestic abuse doesn't have to be violent — it doesn't even have to be physical. The feminists' mantra is, "You don't have to be beaten to be abused."

A 1979 book called *The Battered Woman* by Lenore Walker is credited with establishing feminist theory on domestic violence and in originating what is called the "Battered Woman Syndrome." This book is all hearsay without credible statistical data. She admitted that her "research" and generalizations were based on "a self-volunteered sample" of women who contacted her after hearing her speeches or interviews. Walker mentions the large study of domestic violence undertaken by the National Institute of Mental Health-financed survey of Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, but fails to tell her readers that its final conclusion is that women initiate violence in intimate relationships at least as often as men do.

Nevertheless, Walker's unscientific book had a big impact in spreading the propaganda that the "battered" are always women, that "batterers" are always men, that "battering" is not necessarily a violent or even a physical act. She admitted that "Most of the women in this project describe incidents involving psychological humiliation and verbal harassment as their worst battering experiences, whether or not they had been physically abused." While psychological abuses can be hurtful, they are completely subjective, and it is absurd to pretend that verbal abuse is done only by men against women and not vice versa.

As an example of "battering," Walker defended the woman who admitted she "began to assault Paul physically,

before he assaulted her," but "Paul had been battering her by ignoring her and by working late, in order to move up the corporate ladder." So, trying to do a better job of supporting his family was construed as domestic abuse. Like many feminists, Walker is not trying to improve marriage but rather to destroy it. She urged that "psychotherapists must encourage breaking the family apart."

Domestic violence has become whatever the woman wants to allege, with or without evidence. Examples of claims of domestic abuse include: name-calling, constant criticizing, insulting, belittling the victim, blaming the victim for everything, ignoring or ridiculing the victim's needs, jealousy and possessiveness, insults, put-downs, gestures, facial expressions, looking in a certain way, body postures, and controlling the money. A Justice Department-funded document published by the National Victim Assistance Academy stated a widely accepted definition of "violence" that includes such non-criminal acts as "degradation and humiliation" and "name-calling and constant criticizing." The acts need not be illegal, physical, violent, or threatening.

The domestic violence checklist typically provided by family courts to women seeking divorce and/or sole child custody asks them "if the other parent has *ever* done or threatened to do any of the following": "blaming all problems on you," "following you," "embarrassing, putting you down," "interrupting your eating or sleeping."

Such actions are not illegal or criminal; no one has a right not to be insulted. But in the weird world of the domestic-violence industry, acts that are not criminal between strangers become crimes between members of a household, and such actions can be punished by depriving a man of his father's rights, putting him under a restraining order, and even jailing him. Family courts mete out punishment based on gender and relationships rather than on acts.

Creating a special category of domestic-violence offenses is very much like legislating against hate crimes. Both create a new level of crimes for which punishment is based on who you are rather than what acts you commit, and the "who" in the view of VAWA and the domestic-violence lobby is always the husband and father.

VAWA: Feminist Weapon Against Men

When a woman appeals to a VAWA-funded shelter, she is immediately told she must file for divorce and accuse her husband/boy friend of domestic violence so that a restraining order can be issued against him. That would be rational if we were talking about life-or-limb endangerment. But it makes no sense if abuse involves merely run-of-the-mill disagreements for which mediation and reconciliation could be better for all, especially the children. No VAWA programs teach women how to deal with family disputes without resorting to divorce. No VAWA programs promote intact families or better male-female relationships. VAWA has no provision for

addressing problems within the context of marriage.

What VAWA does is to promote divorce and provide women with weapons, such as the restraining order and free legal assistance, to get sole custody of their children.

The *Illinois Bar Journal* (June 2005) explained how women use court-issued restraining orders as a tool for the mother to get sole child custody and to bar the father from visitation. In big type, the magazine proclaimed: "Orders of protection are designed to prevent domestic violence, but they can also become part of the gamesmanship of divorce." The "game" is that mothers can assert falsehoods or trivial complaints against the father, and get a restraining order based on the presumption that men are abusers of women.

The Final Report of the Child Custody and Visitation Focus Group of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges admitted that "usually judges are not required to make a finding of domestic violence in civil protection order cases." In other words, judges saddle fathers with restraining orders on the wife's say-so without investigation as to whether her claim is true or false, and without accountability if it is false. If a hearing is held, the woman merely needs to prove her claim by a "preponderance of the evidence." That means she doesn't have to prove the abuse happened, only that it is more likely than not that it happened.

Elaine Epstein, former president of the Massachusetts Women's Bar Association, admitted in 1993: "Everyone knows that restraining orders and orders to vacate are granted to virtually all who apply . . . In many [divorce] cases, allegations of abuse are now used for tactical advantage."

The consequences of the issuance of restraining orders are profound: the mother gets a sole-custody order, and the father can be forbidden all contact with his children, excluded from the family residence, and have his assets and future income put under control of the family court. A vast array of legal behavior is suddenly criminalized with harsh penalties. The restraining order frequently precludes the father from possessing a firearm for any purpose, which means he loses his job if he is in the service or law enforcement, or working for a company with so-called zero tolerance policies.

Nevertheless, one study that evaluated the effectiveness of restraining orders concluded that "they were ineffective in stopping physical violence" and another stated that "having a permanent order did not appear to deter most types of abuse."

Billions of dollars have gushed forth from VAWA to the states to finance private victim-advocacy organizations, private domestic-violence coalitions, and the indoctrination of judges, prosecutors and police in feminist ideology. This tax-funded network is staffed by radical feminists who teach the presumption of male and father guilt. VAWA gives \$75 million annually in grants to encourage arrest and enforcement of protection orders, and \$55 million annually to provide free legal assistance to victims (but not to the accused men).

Rep. Deborah Pryce (R-OH) said during the VAWA debate, "Since 1995, states have passed more than 600 laws to combat domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking." Congress should investigate how many of these laws were the result of lobbying by VAWA employees using taxpayers' money. VAWA employees are aggressive advocates of the "must arrest" laws (that require the police to arrest one person [you can guess which one] despite the trivial nature of the alleged abuse and despite the woman's plea that she doesn't want the man arrested), and the "no drop" laws (that require prosecution even though reconciliation has taken place). VAWA employees also lobby against the shared-custody laws that respect father's rights. Studies show these "must arrest" and "no drop" laws don't stop domestic violence, but flood the courts with trivial cases (about pushing, hair-pulling, etc.) alongside of real cases of battering that deserve prosecution.

Congress should not be spending taxpayers' money to deal with marital disputes, and courts should not deprive children of their fathers on the feminists' presumption that fathers are dangerous. The current VAWA reauthorization bill not only continues an extraordinary level of federal funding without accountability, but it makes sure that future funding can go only to the same feminist organizations that have been getting VAWA funds in the past.

An estimated 40% of our nation's children are now living in homes without their own father. Most social problems are caused by kids who grow up in homes without their own fathers: drug abuse, illicit sexual activity, unwed pregnancies, youth suicide, high school dropouts, runaways, and crime. Where have all the fathers gone? Some men are irresponsible slobes, but no evidence exists that nearly half of American children were voluntarily abandoned by their own fathers; there must be other explanations.

Congress should conduct an investigation to find out how much of this fatherlessness is the result of bad government policies and putting taxpayers' money in the hands of a small radical group that is biased against marriage and fathers. Congress should terminate funding for the Violence Against Women Act — a hate-men law that throws husbands and fathers out of their homes and deprives them of their children after a very ordinary squabble masquerading as domestic violence. VAWA is not about stopping domestic violence — it is about empowering radical feminists, using taxpayers' money, to change our culture.

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