

Step 3: Talking Points to Cover

VAWA is riddled with waste, fraud, and abuse. It's time for change. And it's time to put this on the political agenda.

The goal of the Truth and Consequences campaign is to meet with every Congressman around the country and explain the problem of VAWA abuse. August is often a good time for a meeting, but you may hold the meeting anytime before November 7.

Previous Alerts asked you to contact the Scheduler to set up a meeting, and then to prepare yourself for the meeting. You may want to review these Alerts at: www.mediadar.org/alert20060626.php and www.mediadar.org/alert20060710.php.

This list of Talking Points is intended to outline the main points to cover during your meeting. *This is a possible set of issues to be covered —feel free to select the points you want to discuss.*

These Talking Points are based on information contained in 3 handouts to be printed out from the RADAR website and given to the Congressman or staffer:

1. Massive Civil Rights Violations under the Violence Against Act – www.mediadar.org/docs/Candidate_Handout-Civil_Rights.pdf
2. Letterman Lawyers Fight Restraining Order -- www.comcast.net/tv/index.jsp?cat=TELEVISION&fn=/2005/12/21/288641.html
3. Without Restraint: The Use and Abuse of Domestic Restraining Orders -- www.mediadar.org/docs/VAWA-Restraining-Orders.pdf

We recommend before the meeting, use a colored highlighter to emphasize key sentences in the handouts.

These are the Talking Points:

- 1. The Violence Against Women Act was conceived with good intentions, and has done good things in treating victims of domestic violence. However, the law enforcement aspects of the law are now raising concerns about widespread violations of civil rights.**
- 2. The problem begins with VAWA funding to train judges and police officers.** [Read out loud the quote from first handout: “Your job is not to become concerned about all the constitutional protections...] **These training programs have been found to be biased and misleading. That sets the stage for how the rest of the domestic violence system works.**
- 3. Turn to the second handout, Letterman Lawyers Fight Restraining Order. Outline the**

key facts of the case, in which a judge issued a restraining order under civil law to protect a woman from a man who was allegedly using mental telepathy to harass her.

4. Go to the third handout, Without Restraint and turn to page 7, which is an actual restraining order from Illinois. **Review the check boxes in section 1, which reveal that physical abuse was not even alleged. Then go to sections 5 and 7, which spell out the dire consequences of this order, which turned the child's father into a mere visitor.**

5. Go the page 9 of the third handout, half way down. **Highlight the fact that 2-3 million temporary restraining orders are issued every year. In half of those orders, there is not even an *allegation* of physical violence!** [Key point, let this really sink in] **Under civil law, only a preponderance of evidence is necessary, which explains why these orders are so difficult to get dismissed.** [Again, key point].

6. Now go back to the Massive Civil Rights handout, to the Arrest and Prosecution section – we're now dealing with *criminal* (not civil) law. **As a result of VAWA, 33 states now have mandatory arrest laws, which disregard civil liberties protections.** Review example of former NFL quarterback Warren Moon.

7. Go back to the Massive Civil Rights handout and review whatever other material you have time for.

8. Now highlight your request: **We are asking you, right after the Nov. 7 elections, to call upon Congress to hold hearings to investigate VAWA abuse.** Don't expect a definite answer at this time.

Leave enough time for discussion. End the meeting on a positive note. Don't pressure the person for an answer to your request.