

Daughters of Penelope Civic Responsibility Campaign

Action Alert

Help the Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus Grow!

Background

The **Victims' Rights Caucus (VRC)** is a bipartisan caucus that advocates for crime victims, including domestic violence, and law enforcement officials. The Founder and Co-Chairman is Rep. **Ted Poe** (R-TX). He chairs the Caucus with Rep. **Jim Costa** (D-CA).

Since 2007, the leadership of the Daughters of Penelope has worked with Rep. Poe and Rep. Costa and their staffs to help the Caucus grow and increase its effectiveness.

- In fact, 16 members of Congress have joined the VRC thanks to the outreach of the Daughters of Penelope.

There is plenty of ongoing work to do to educate members of Congress—especially new ones—about the importance of supporting federal programs and legislation that support victims of crime.

Facts about Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pervasive, life-threatening crime affecting millions of individuals across our nation regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, race or religion. The statistics¹ are alarming:

- Nationwide, an average of three women are murdered by a current or former intimate partner every day.
- One in four women and one in seven men have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner.
- Approximately 15.5 million children are exposed to domestic violence annually.
- 51.5% of victims who identified a need for housing services did not receive them.
- The cost of intimate partner violence exceeds \$6.5 billion each year.
- Domestic violence has been estimated to cost employers in the U.S. up to \$13 billion a year.

Though steady progress has been made there are many victims who still suffer in silence. In fact, a 2016 24-hour survey of domestic violence programs across the U.S. found that although 20,239 Hotline calls were answered (averaging more than 14 calls every minute), that nearly 12,000 requests for services (such as emergency shelter, transportation, or legal representation) went unmet because programs lacked the resources to provide them. The unconscionable gap between need and resources only widens.

¹ Statistics by National Network to End Domestic Violence, "Domestic and Sexual Violence Fact Sheet."

Why is this Caucus of Interest to the Daughters of Penelope?

The Victims' Rights Caucus creates awareness of legislation that assists victims of domestic violence and protects federal programs that provide critical financial assistance to victims' services. For decades, the Daughters of Penelope has had a vested interest in the issue of

domestic violence as DOP chapters support local shelters and the victims they house all across the country. In 1979, the Daughters of Penelope sponsored **Penelope House** in Mobile, Alabama, and in October 2009, the Daughters of Penelope opened its second nationally-sponsored shelter, **Penelope's Place**, in Brockton, Massachusetts.

Status

Currently, there are **68** members of the House of Representatives who are members of the Caucus.

- [Click here to see listing of VRC members.](#)

Note: The Caucus does not include Senators as members; just U.S. Representatives.

Your Action is Needed!

Did you see your U.S. Representative on the list [found here](#)? **If not**, please contact your member of Congress and ask him/her to join the Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus today.

- **Note:** Be certain to state in our communication that your representative can join by contacting the office of Congressman Ted Poe or Congressman Jim Costa.

If you **do** see your U.S. Representative on the list, please contact him/her to offer thanks and appreciation for being a member of the Victim's Rights Caucus.

How Do I Contact My Member of Congress?

VIA Internet/E-mail/Letter/FAX

- Find your U.S. representative [here](#).

VIA Telephone

- In addition to writing your elected representative, you can also call him/her. You can contact your U.S. Representative through the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

Helpful Tips

- ✓ Identify yourself as a constituent.
- ✓ If calling, ask to speak to the **Legislative Assistant** who handles the representative's **Judiciary** portfolio
- ✓ Keep your message as brief and as focused as possible.
- ✓ For expediency, we recommend sending a fax or telephoning as opposed to correspondence that is mailed. However, mailing a letter is suitable.
- ✓ Remember, members of Congress work for you and they want to hear from you.
- ✓ **Note:** For the purposes of record keeping, please send a copy of your correspondence to: Executive Director Elena Saviolakis at Elena@ahopa.org.
 - This will allow us to know who in Congress has been contacted for future follow-up.

Questions?

- ✓ Please contact Daughters of Penelope Legislative Consultant Andrew Kaffes, Andrew@agkaffes.com.
- ✓ For more information about the Victim's Rights Caucus, please visit <http://vrc.poe.house.gov/>

Email/Letter Sample Content for VRC

Dear Congress(wo)man [LAST NAME]:

On behalf of the Daughters of Penelope (DOP), a premier international women's association, I am writing as a constituent to invite you to join the Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus.

The bipartisan Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus is a voice in Congress for victims of crime. Crime recognizes no political parties, ideologies, or Congressional district boundaries. The mission of the Caucus is to elevate crime victim issues in Congress in a bipartisan manner without infringing on the rights of the accused, and to represent and to advocate before the Administration and within Congress on behalf of crime victims. The Caucus is co-chaired by its founders, Congressmen Ted Poe and Jim Costa.

The Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus is a proven and effective leader in advocating for crime victims. During its nine-year existence, the Caucus has taken the lead in protecting programs that provide critical support for victim services throughout the nation, including the Crime Victims Fund (VOCA) and Violence Against Woman Act (VAWA). The Caucus was also instrumental in the enactment of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, the Cruise Vessel Safety and Security Act, the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011, the Victims of Child Abuse Act Reauthorization of 2013, and the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015. It also has co-sponsored resolutions recognizing National Crime Victims' Rights Week, National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and National Stalking Awareness Month.

Why is the Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus of importance to the Daughters of Penelope?

For decades, the Daughters of Penelope has had a vested interest in the issue of domestic violence, supporting local shelters and the victims they house all across the country. In 1979, the DOP sponsored **Penelope House**, a nationally-recognized model shelter located in Mobile, Alabama. Moreover, in October 2009, the DOP opened its second nationally-sponsored shelter, **Penelope's Place**, in Brockton, Massachusetts. Our chapters also support local domestic violence shelters. Because the Caucus creates awareness of legislation that assists victims of domestic violence, the DOP has an interest to see the Caucus grow and flourish.

For more information on the Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus, or to join, please contact Rep. Ted Poe or Rep. Jim Costa.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. I anticipate a favorable reply.

Respectfully submitted,
[NAME]
[CHAPTER/DISTRICT TITLE, if appropriate]
[FULL ADDRESS]