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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Daughters of Penelope Applauds Victims' Rights Caucus' Effort to Protect Crime Victims Fund

DOP Sends Letter to Top Appropriators

WASHINGTON (December 3, 2015)—The Daughters of Penelope (DOP), a leading international women's organization, applauds the efforts of the Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus (VRC) to protect the Crime Victims Fund from a budget cut as congressional appropriators work to finalize FY2016 appropriations, announced Grand President Connie Pilallis. The recent Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 rescinded $1.5 billion from the Fund to be used as an offset. The Grand President also sent a letter to appropriators echoing the request of the VRC co-chairs and conveying what the funding means to domestic violence programs supported by the DOP.

The Co-Chairs of the Victims' Rights Caucus, U.S. Reps. Ted Poe (R-TX) and Jim Costa (D-CA), have written two letters, one to congressional leadership and a second to top appropriators that urge Congress to refrain from raiding the Crime Victims Fund, which is comprised mostly of criminal fines and no taxpayer dollars. The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) created the Crime Victims Fund to serve as a mechanism to fund services to the nation's victims of crime.

"As you know, for over 30 years, the Crime Victims Fund has been the lifeblood of crime victim services. The Fund is comprised of fines and fees from criminals, contains no tax dollars, and enables crime victims and their families to receive assistance in order to heal," Reps. Poe and Costa wrote to appropriators on November 17, 2015.

In a separate October 27, 2015 letter to then-Speaker John Boehner and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, the VRC co-chairs wrote: *"It is inappropriate that money intended for direct victim services would be used as an offset for any other purpose. Not only does raiding the Crime Victims Fund violate the intent of the law, but it violates the statute itself…"*

"We sincerely thank the co-chairs of the Victims' Rights Caucus, Congressmen Poe and Costa, for their leadership on this issue and for standing up for victims of crime," Grand President Pilallis said. "VOCA funding, via the Crime Victims Fund, is critical to support the programs that provide assistance to victims of domestic violence and abuse. DOP-supported domestic violence shelters such as Penelope House and Penelope's Place rely on sustained VOCA grant funding. We ask Congress to refrain from cutting services to victims."

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For example, Penelope House utilizes VOCA grant funding to help fund a portion of salaries for Court Advocates, Domestic Violence Case Managers or Shelter Supervisors, Pilallis explained.

- **READ:** Grand President's letter to House appropriators

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 Family Violence Center, a nationally-recognized model shelter located in Mobile, Ala. It was the first of its kind in Alabama. In October 2009, the DOP opened its second nationally sponsored shelter, Penelope's Place, in Brockton, Mass. In the past, the Daughters of Penelope has supported WIN Hellas, which is an NGO based in Athens, Greece that is active in the prevention of violence against women.

The mission of the DOP is to promote the ancient Greek ideals of Education, Philanthropy, Civic Responsibility, and Family and Individual Excellence through community service and volunteerism.

Please visit www.daughtersofpenelope.org for more information about the DOP or any of its programs or projects.

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November 19, 2015

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 LHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

On behalf of the Daughters of Penelope, a preeminent international organization for women of Hellenic heritage and Philhellenes that sponsors and supports domestic violence centers throughout the United States, I write to urge the Committee on Appropriations to not cut funds allocated for the **Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)** as the committee works to finalize FY2016 appropriations. VOCA created the Crime Victims Fund, which serves as a mechanism to fund compensation and services for the nation's victims of crime through fines and penalties on federal criminal offenders.

The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 "rescinded and permanently cancelled" $1.5 billion from the **Crime Victims Fund** for the purpose of utilizing it as an offset to pay for an overall increase in funding. This causes serious concern for a few reasons. First, the Crime Victims Fund contains no taxpayer dollars. It is funded largely from criminal fines. Secondly, according to the co-chairmen of the Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus, U.S. Reps. Ted Poe and Jim Costa, "not only does raiding the Crime Victims Fund violate the intent of the law, but it violates the statute itself…"

Penelope House Domestic Violence Center, Mobile, Ala., was the first domestic violence shelter established in the state of Alabama in 1979 and has been recognized by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as a leading, model shelter for others to emulate. Penelope House utilizes VOCA grant funding to provide direct services to its domestic violence victims. For example, through two annual VOCA grants, one grant funds a portion of salaries for Court Advocates and the second grant funds Domestic Violence Case Managers/Shelter Supervisor. This is especially important as Penelope House's services have been expanded to include two more counties.

We appreciated your support for crime victims in the recent past by increasing the Crime Victims Fund's cap, which was set for FY16 at $2.7 billion as passed in the House's FY16 CJS Appropriations Bill. We ask for your continued support to ensure that the Fund's cap is set as high as possible in the final FY16 omnibus appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Connie Pilallis
Grand President

Cc: Rep. John Culberson, chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies.

Rep. Michael Honda, ranking member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies.