

The President's Radio Address

October 28, 2000

Good morning. Here in Washington, after months of partisan delay by the congressional majority, Congress still hasn't completed its work on the budget—even though the budget year ended a month ago.

Yet, when Congress has acted in a spirit of bipartisanship, we've made remarkable progress. Today I want to talk to you about the most significant step we've ever taken to secure the health and safety of women at home and around the world. It's a new law I'm signing called the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act.

In America today, domestic violence is the number one health risk for women between the ages of 15 and 44. Close to a third of all women murdered in this country were killed by their husbands, former husbands, or boyfriends. Every 12 seconds, another woman is beaten. That's nearly 900,000 victims every year.

And statistics tell us that in half the families where a spouse is beaten, the children are beaten, too. Domestic violence is a criminal activity. It devastates its victims and affects us all. It increases health costs, keeps people from showing up to work, prevents them from performing at their best. It destroys families, relationships, and lives, and it tears at the fabric of who we are as a people.

That's why, as part of our 1994 crime bill, Al Gore and I fought hard to pass the landmark Violence Against Women Act—the foundation of the bill I will be signing. That law imposed tough new penalties for actions of violence against women. It helped to train police, prosecutors, and judges to better understand domestic violence, to recognize its symptoms when they see them, and to take steps to prevent them.

It gave grants to shelters that are havens for victims of domestic violence, and it set up a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week toll-free national hotline to help women get the emergency assistance and counseling they need, to find a shelter, and to report abuse to the authorities.

Most of all, the Violence Against Women Act worked. The hotline has been a tremen-

dous help. More than half a million victims have found assistance by calling it. Police officers who once shied away from so-called family squabbles are now getting involved in saving lives. Best of all, violence against women by an intimate partner has fallen 21 percent since 1993.

The bill I'm signing will keep that progress going by keeping the Violence Against Women Act the law of the land. It provides new resources for Native American communities, restores protections for battered immigrant women, and, for the first time, extends a law to cover women abused by their boyfriends.

The new law contains another provision, too, one that will strengthen our fight against the insidious global practice of trafficking in human beings. Every year, a million or more women, children, and men are forced or tricked into lives of utter misery—into prostitution, sweatshop work, domestic or farm labor, or debt bondage. This is slavery, plain and simple. And it's not just something that happens far from our shores.

In fact, each year as many as 50,000 people are brought to the United States for this cruel purpose. We must do our part to stop those responsible for these crimes and to help their victims. The bill I'm signing will help to do that.

It establishes the first Federal law that specifically targets this problem, setting out harsh penalties for those who trade in human beings, requiring convicted traffickers to forfeit their assets and make restitution to those they have exploited. The law gives victims better access to services like shelters, counseling, and medical care. It enables victims to stay in the United States so they can receive those services and helps law enforcement agencies to prosecute the traffickers. It increases our assistance to other countries as well to help them detect and punish this pernicious practice, and it provides for sanctions for any countries that refuse to take steps to end trafficking in women and children. I worked hard for these provisions. They build on what we've been doing at home and abroad to address the problem.

We see in the success of this landmark legislation once again that there is no real secret to getting things done in Washington. When

we put progress over partisanship, we get results. When we work together, we get results.

Now, we've shown once again we can work together by passing this landmark legislation to fight violence against women. Let's follow the rule and finish all the work the American people expect of us. It's time for Congress to set partisanship aside on the last two unfinished bills and complete a budget with smaller class sizes, modern classrooms, family tax cuts, and a higher minimum wage—one that honors our values and secures a better future for our children and our great Nation.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:57 p.m. on October 27 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 27 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. H.R. 3244, approved October 28, was assigned Public Law No. 106-386.

Statement on Signing the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000

October 28, 2000

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 3244, the "Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000" (the "Act"). This landmark legislation accomplishes a number of important objectives and Administration priorities. It strengthens and improves upon the Nation's efforts to fight violence against women. It also provides important new tools and resources to combat the worldwide scourge of trafficking in persons and provides vital assistance to victims of trafficking. And it helps American victims of terrorism abroad to collect court-awarded compensation.

This legislation builds on the "Violence Against Women Act of 1994" (VAWA), which created new Federal crimes and enhanced penalties to combat sexual assault and domestic violence, and established new grant programs for law enforcement agencies, prosecution offices, and victim services organizations to fight violence against women. It also authorized funding for education, outreach, and prevention programs, which have

helped to create coordinated community responses to violence against women throughout the United States. While we can certainly take pride in what we have accomplished since 1994, we know we must do more. To that end, H.R. 3244 reauthorizes VAWA and improves on the original bill by establishing several new initiatives.

I am particularly pleased that H.R. 3244 reauthorizes VAWA's grant programs through Fiscal Year 2005. The Act improves several current programs by setting aside 5 percent of VAWA grant funds for tribes and directing resources toward certain traditionally underserved populations, such as victims of dating violence, older women, and women with disabilities. The Act requires certain VAWA's grantees to facilitate the filing and service of protection orders without cost to the victims. The Act authorizes a civil legal assistance program for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, who desperately need help with legal matters related to their abuse. The Act authorizes appropriations through Fiscal Year 2005 for the National Domestic Violence Hotline, battered women's shelters, and rape prevention and education grants. H.R. 3244 requires national standards and protocols for conducting sexual assault forensic examinations, as well as establishes supervised visitation programs, which will help ensure that children are safe when visiting with their parents and that battered women remain safe during visitation exchanges.

The Act also will improve the ability of Federal prosecutors to prosecute interstate crimes of domestic violence, stalking, and violations of protection orders. The Act creates an interstate cyberstalking offense. The Act enhances the enforcement of protection orders across State and tribal lines by prohibiting registration as a prerequisite to enforcement of out-of-state or tribal orders and by prohibiting notification of a batterer without the victim's consent when an order is registered in a new jurisdiction. Moreover, the Act amends the Parental Kidnaping Prevention Act to expand emergency jurisdiction to cover domestic violence, thus enabling victims who flee abuse to obtain custody orders without returning to the jurisdiction where the batterer resides.