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September 29, 2005

The Honorable Bill Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate
509 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
528 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Frist and Minority Leader Reid:

I write on behalf of the American Bar Association to urge you to act now to bring pending legislation to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), S.1197, to the Senate floor. S.1197, introduced by Senators Joseph Biden, Orrin Hatch and Arlen Specter on June 8, 2005, was approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee on September 8 and placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar on September 12, 2005. With the action of the House of Representatives yesterday, voting 415-4 to approve legislation that included its version of provisions to reauthorize VAWA, the time is right for the Senate to act on S.1197.

Since enactment in 1994, VAWA programs and policies have led to profound improvements in the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence and sexual assaults. For instance, in the past decade over a million battered women have found justice in our courtrooms and obtained protection orders, and over 300 courts have some specialized docket processes to better address the distinct nature of domestic violence cases. More than 660 new state laws on domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking have been passed.

We must not let this successful program languish, as there is much more that must be done to combat the violence. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, on average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in this country every day. More than 2.5 million women are victims of violence each

year, and nearly one in every three women experiences at least one physical assault by a partner during adulthood. Reports also indicate that up to ten million children experience domestic violence in their homes each year. We believe S.1197 strikes the appropriate balance between renewing core programs, stiffening criminal penalties, closing loopholes and creating needed new initiatives for children and prevention efforts. We strongly support the provisions in S.1197 to strengthen and renew the Legal Assistance and STOP grant programs.

S.1197 enjoys broad bipartisan support and we believe it will be overwhelmingly approved by the Senate when it comes to a vote. But if Congress does not approve final legislation to reauthorize VAWA in short order, existing programs will suffer disruption and be harmed unnecessarily. We urge you to bring S.1197 up for consideration on the Senate floor as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert D. Evans".

Robert D. Evans

cc: The Honorable Joseph Biden
The Honorable Orrin Hatch
The Honorable Arlen Specter