



One of "America's 100 Best Charities"
— *Worth* magazine

2000 L Street NW
Suite 406
Washington, DC 20036
p. 202.544.1034
f. 202.544.3556
e. info@rainn.org

April 26, 2012

The Honorable John Cornyn
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sen. Cornyn:

I am writing to express RAINN's concern with the draft VAWA amendment by Sen. Klobuchar. Unlike the Cornyn amendment, we do not believe that this draft amendment will make effective or positive improvements to the Debbie Smith Act.

The Klobuchar amendment adds an additional purpose area to the Debbie Smith Act promoting inter-agency communication, potentially at the expense of reducing the backlog. Funds used for this section have the potential to be used for radios and other communication tools. While we can't speak to the need for such spending, we do know that this would not have a direct impact on the backlog and would not aid in solving cases. Unlike the Cornyn amendment, which nearly doubles the percentage of Debbie Smith funds that are spent on casework, this provision would divert money from labs and go against the congressional intent of the original bill.

In addition, this draft would allow the Justice Department to fund backlog audits, but would not designate funds specifically for that purpose. It would not establish a registry to allow the collection of data; would not establish any process for transparency; and would not provide the kind of comprehensive information that is needed to efficiently target Debbie Smith funds to the areas of greatest need. Finally, it strips out a number of provisions that were included at the request of law enforcement agencies, in order to ensure that their compliance would not be burdensome. The SAFER Act section of the Cornyn amendment has none of these defects, and has safeguards to ensure that funds spent on an audit and registry will not take away from funds spent on testing DNA evidence. Overall, we believe this amendment is largely symbolic and will not have the impact in reducing the backlog that we find in the Cornyn amendment.

RAINN is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotlines (800.656.HOPE and rainn.org), which have helped more than 1.7 million people since 1994. RAINN also carries out programs to prevent sexual assault, help victims, and ensure that rapists are brought to justice. For more information about RAINN, please visit www.rainn.org.

I appreciate your work on this issue, and encourage you to continue to push for adoption of the Cornyn amendment, which will make real, positive changes in the lives of victims.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Berkowitz".

Scott Berkowitz
President and Founder