

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

The Institute for Science and Human Values, in accordance with the provisions of the NeoHumanist Statement of Secular Principles and Values, lobbies to promote and protect the Violence against Women Act. VAWA's programs support state, tribal and local efforts to address the pervasive and insidious crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. These programs have made great progress towards reducing the violence, helping victims to be healthy and feel safe and holding perpetrators accountable.

Since its original passage in 1994, VAWA has dramatically enhanced our nation's response to violence against girls and women, boys and men. More victims report domestic violence to the police and the rate of non-fatal intimate partner violence against women has decreased by 64%. The sexual assault services program in VAWA helps rape crisis centers keep their doors open to provide the frontline response to victims of rape. VAWA provides for a coordinated community approach, improving collaboration between law enforcement and victim services providers to better meet the needs of victims. These comprehensive and cost-effective programs not only save lives, they also save money. In fact, VAWA saved nearly \$12.6 billion in net averted social costs in just its first six years.

The Institute for Science and Human Values fully supports the White House National Action Plan as outlined below.

UNITED STATES NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY December 2011 The White House Washington DC

Statement of National Policy

The goal of this National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security is as simple as it is profound: to empower half the world's population as equal partners in preventing conflict and building peace in countries threatened and affected by war, violence, and insecurity. Achieving this goal is critical to our national and global security.

Deadly conflicts can be more effectively avoided, and peace can be best forged and sustained, when women become equal partners in all aspects of peace-building and conflict prevention, when their lives are protected, their experiences considered, and their voices heard.

As directed by the Executive Order signed by President Obama entitled Instituting a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, this Plan describes the course the United States Government will take to accelerate, institutionalize, and better coordinate our efforts to advance women's inclusion in peace negotiations, peacebuilding activities, and conflict prevention; to protect women from sexual and gender-based violence; and to ensure equal access to relief and recovery assistance, in areas of conflict and insecurity. It is guided by the following five principles:

First, the engagement and protection of women as agents of peace and stability will be central to the United States' efforts to promote security, prevent, respond to, and resolve conflict, and rebuild societies.

Second, by building on the goals for gender integration described in the United States National Security Strategy and the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, the United States' efforts on Women, Peace, and Security will complement and enhance existing initiatives to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, ensure respect for human rights, and address the needs of vulnerable populations in crisis and conflict environments.

The U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security builds upon the goals for gender integration described in the U.S. National Security Strategy and the 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review. Gender integration involves identifying and addressing, in all our policies and programs, gender differences and inequalities, as well as the roles of women and men. The goal of gender integration or "mainstreaming" is to promote gender equality and improve programming and policy outcomes.

Third, in executing this policy, the United States will be guided by the principle of inclusion, seeking out the views and participation of a wide variety of stakeholders—women and girls, men and boys, and members of marginalized groups, including youth, ethnic, racial or religious minorities, persons with disabilities, displaced persons and indigenous peoples, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals, and people from all socioeconomic strata.

Fourth, in order to maximize the impact of this Plan, the United States will ensure that activities in support of Women, Peace and Security are coordinated among all relevant departments and agencies (agencies) of the government, integrated into relevant United States foreign policy initiatives, and enhanced by engagement with international partners.

Finally, United States Government agencies will be accountable for the implementation of the policies and initiatives endorsed in this Plan.

Above all, this National Action Plan expresses the United States' unqualified commitment to integrating women's views and perspectives fully into our diplomatic, security, and development efforts—not simply as beneficiaries, but as agents of peace, reconciliation, development, growth, and stability. We welcome this opportunity to work with our international partners to make the promise of this commitment real, to advance implementation of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325, and to make significant progress toward the goal of sustainable peace and security for all.