



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 11, 2022

Press Contact: Candy Keown  
[candy.keown@aknwrc.org](mailto:candy.keown@aknwrc.org)

Tel. (907)378-3339  
[www.aknwrc.org](http://www.aknwrc.org)

**Statement from Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) on the passage of Bipartisan Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization**

The Senate overwhelming, in a vote of 68 to 31, passed the 2022 Consolidated Appropriations Act that includes the bipartisan Violence Against Women's Reauthorization Act (VAWA), authored by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-California), Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska). The Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) thanks and acknowledges all the work on the reauthorization of VAWA by advocates and allies across the country that worked to educate why VAWA is so important to the safety of native women and children. We are filled with gratitude for the work of Senator Murkowski and her staff for hearing the needs of survivors and working towards meaningful solutions.

At this moment, we acknowledge that it takes a "village to raise a child" and Congress has heard the voices of those harmed by centuries of injustices from failed laws and policies that have created a crisis in our tribal communities, especially in Alaska. With the inclusion of the Alaska Tribal Public Safety Empowerment section the new law recognizes the inherent authority of Alaska Native Tribes and provides much needed resources to protect our citizens from domestic violence and other related crimes under certain conditions. While there is much work to be done, we want to take this moment to pause and celebrate what this law can mean to our communities.

The Tribal Law and Order Commission Report in 2013 found that nearly 40% of Alaska Native communities lack any law enforcement presence within our village and that a response can be hours, days and sometimes weeks away. This reauthorization of VAWA specifically recognizes the challenges and disproportionate rate of sexual assault and domestic violence against Alaska Natives by providing funding and resources in the form of grants and the ability for tribal governments to better participate actively in investigation and prosecutions. The new special criminal jurisdiction pilot project provides support and funding for up to 5 Alaska Tribes per

year, who meet the requirements, which includes providing protections equivalent to the federal Bill of Rights for prosecution of all perpetrators of domestic violence. Most tribes already provide many of these basic constitutional rights.

The new law does not modify existing responsibilities or diminish the authority of the state of Alaska in any manner. Rather, it frees up resources so that Tribes are able to address local issues with local solutions, which can be more timely and impactful for making change and creating safer communities for all Alaskans. We look forward to the opportunities for new collaboration and partnership with our state and federal partners. Thank you Senator Murkowski and Representative Young for standing up and protecting our citizens.

**About the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center:**

Organized in 2015, the AKNWRC is a tribal nonprofit organization dedicated to ending violence against women with Alaska's 229 tribes and allied organizations. AKNWRC board members are Alaska Native women raised in Alaska Native Villages and have over 153 years of combined experience in tribal governments, nonprofit management, domestic violence, and sexual assault advocacy (both individual crisis and systems and grassroots social change advocacy at the local, statewide, regional, national and international levels), and other social services experience.

**P.O. Box 80382, Fairbanks, AK 99708  
(907) 382-3990**