

August 24, 2020

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL URGES CONGRESS TO ADOPT MEASURES TO EXPAND FUNDING FOR CRIME VICTIMS

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today joined a coalition of state and territorial attorneys general representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories urging Congress to adopt key changes to the Victims of Crime Act that provide critical financial support to victims of violent crimes and their families.

[In a letter](#) to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer and the House and Senate Judiciary Committees, Raoul and the coalition call on Congress to adopt changes to the Crime Victims Fund, a national fund that supports state victims' services programs. The recommendations will stabilize the fund's finances and provide more flexibility to grantees who are providing services to victims and their families.

"Individuals seeking assistance through the Crime Victims Fund are doing so at possibly the worst moment in their lives," Raoul said. "No deserving recipient should be turned away because of the fund's shortcomings. I am committed to ensuring that survivors of crime and their families receive services they need to support their recoveries, and I urge Congress to adopt measures to expand funding in order to ensure these services can be provided."

The fund, established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA), is the primary funding source for victim services in all 50 states and six U.S. territories. Deposits to the fund originate from criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalties and special assessments collected by U.S. Attorneys' offices, federal courts and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The fund covers the expenses of essential direct services and support for victims and survivors in the aftermath of crime, including medical care, mental health counseling, lost wages, courtroom advocacy and temporary housing.

The financial health of the Crime Victims Fund is at risk. In 2015, Congress increased the cap on distributions to the fund, allowing 2.5 million more victims to receive support. According to the coalition's letter, while "deposits have sharply decreased in recent years due to a decline in the fines and penalties recouped from federal criminal cases, withdrawals have increased at a rapid pace."

Raoul and the coalition make three recommendations to promote the fund's sustainability, and preserve access to programs and services:

- **Redirect fines and fees from corporate deferred and non-prosecution agreements to the fund.** The Department of Justice increasingly uses deferred and non-prosecution agreements to resolve corporate misconduct. Raoul and the coalition ask Congress to redirect these deposits to the fund. In 2018 and 2019, recoveries resulting from these agreements were about \$8 billion each year.
- **Increase the rate of federal reimbursement to states for victim compensation programs.** The fund currently reimburses state programs that provide financial assistance to victims at a rate of 60 percent, the remainder usually being funded by fines and fees in state courts. The letter recommends Congress reimburse state programs at a rate of 75 percent.
- **Extend the amount of time VOCA funds can be spent.** VOCA requires recipients to spend grants within a four-year period. Raoul and the coalition ask Congress to extend the period of

funding so that state and local organizations can better plan and predict funding for long-term services.

Ensuring that victims of crime and their families have access to resources that support their recoveries has been one of Attorney General Raoul's top priorities. Attorney General Raoul has worked to improve his office's Crime Victim Services Division by expanding access to crime victim services and implementing a trauma-informed, more victim-centric approach to assisting victims and families. Raoul's office has made the previously-paper based application for crime victims compensation available online.

Attorney General Raoul encourages individuals who have been impacted by a violent crime to call his office's Crime Victims Assistance Line at 1-800-228-3368 or visit the [Attorney General's website](#).

Joining Raoul in the letter are the attorneys general of Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.