



WomanView

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Support S.B. 1770: The Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act Contact your State Senator Today

As the economic recession continues to strain families across America, survivors of domestic violence have become even more vulnerable. The declining economy has compounded the challenges survivors face: increased tension within families and more difficulty in finding assistance and refuge. While [demand for domestic violence programs continues to escalate due to financial hardships at home](#), survivors have fewer places to turn to as all levels of government consider cutting back on social-service spending.

The [Illinois Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act \(VESSA\)](#) addresses this problem by recognizing that job preservation is key to helping survivors attain self-sufficiency and leave abusive relationships. Enacted in 2003, VESSA provides employment protections for survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Under VESSA, eligible employees may take up to 12 workweeks of unpaid, job-guaranteed leave during any 12-month period in order to seek medical attention, recover from physical or psychological injuries caused by the violence, obtain services from a victim service organization, participate in safety planning, or seek legal assistance or remedies. VESSA also prohibits employers from discriminating against employees who are survivors of domestic or sexual violence.

The Shriver Center is working to improve VESSA by sponsoring an amendment, [S.B. 1770](#), that will assist survivors by

- expanding the number of employees covered under VESSA by reducing the current private employer threshold of 50 or more employees to 15 or more employees;
- creating a private right of action that will provide an alternative to the current enforcement mechanism administered by the Illinois Department of Labor; and
- adding provisions that encourage employer compliance, including monetary penalties for failing to maintain employee confidentiality or post Department of Labor notices detailing employee rights under VESSA.

S.B. 1770 will come to a vote in the State Senate no later than this Friday, April 3rd. To ensure that S.B. 1770 passes the Illinois Senate we encourage you to act now and support VESSA. Please contact your senator and urge her or him to vote YES on S.B. 1770 and become a cosponsor of the bill. You may contact your senator by calling the toll-free capitol switchboard at 1.888.801.4426 or if you prefer to email your senator, visit our Take Action page at: http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1281/t/1577/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=26842.

If you don't know the name of your senator, or you need to look up your district number, you can find this information easily by visiting <http://www.elections.state.il.us/DistrictLocator/SelectSearchType.aspx>.

Thank you for your support.

For more information about the Illinois Victims' Security and Safety Act (VESSA) and S.B. 1770, contact [Wendy Pollack](#), director, Women's Law and Policy Project, Shriver Center, 312.263.3830 ext. 238, wendypollack@povertyllaw.org.