



# WomanView

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## Legislative Update: Action Still Needed on the Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act Amendment and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Access Bill

Immediate action is needed to ensure passage of two pieces of Illinois legislation that reinforce the safety net for the most vulnerable persons, which is vital during these difficult economic times. The two bills are SB 1770, which amends the Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA), and HB 2383, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Access bill.

### SB 1770: The Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA) Amendment

VESSA promotes employment stability, economic security, and safety for employees coping with domestic or sexual violence by permitting them to take unpaid leave to address domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking and by providing discrimination protections related to such violence.

What SB 1770 does:

- Amends current law to allow more covered employees by reducing the threshold number of employees in private industry from 50 or more employees to 15 or more employees;
- Updates current law to include recent legislation that was not in effect when VESSA was first enacted (e.g., civil no contact orders); and
- Provides clarification on some provisions of the law.

Bill Status as of May 1, 2009—SB 1770 passed the Illinois Senate on April 1<sup>st</sup>. The Shriver Center worked with representatives of the business community on an amendment that passed out of the House Labor Committee by a unanimous vote on April 29<sup>th</sup>. We anticipate that the Illinois House will vote on the bill, possibly as early as this week. If SB 1770 passes out of the House, the bill will go back to the Senate for concurrence on the amendment. To check on the bill's updated status, visit the Illinois General Assembly website at [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov).

**TAKE ACTION NOW**—Please call (Springfield office phone number is best), email, or write to members of the Illinois House of Representatives, both Democrats and Republicans, and ask them to vote in favor of SB 1770 when it is called for a vote on the House floor next week and urge them to sign on as a co-sponsor of the bill. For contact information for your Illinois state representative, go to [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org) or if you prefer to email your representative, visit our **Take Action** page at: [http://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/1281/t/1577/campaign.jsp?campaign\\_KEY=26842](http://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/1281/t/1577/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=26842).

For more information on VESSA, contact [Wendy Pollack](mailto:Wendy.Pollack@povertylaw.org), director, Women's Law and Policy Project, Shriver Center, [wendypollack@povertylaw.org](mailto:wendypollack@povertylaw.org), 312.263.3830 ext. 238.

### HB 2383: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Access Bill

TANF is a cash assistance program that provides temporary financial assistance to pregnant women and needy families with one or more dependent child to help pay for food, housing, utilities, and other expenses.

What HB 2383 does:

- Improves access by stressing that TANF's purpose is to target assistance to families in need and that caseloads may increase during times of severe economic downturn. Work requirements and time limits remain as core elements of the program.
- Makes all families living in "deep poverty" (below 50% FPL, \$9156/year for family of 3) financially eligible for TANF.
- Continues to encourage families to seek and retain employment by allowing them to continue receiving limited assistance until their earnings have lifted them out of poverty (above the federal poverty level).
- Provides that applicants will receive timely assistance needed to stabilize their lives and promptly undergo a thorough assessment to guide their assignment to work activities.
- Protects victims of violence by expanding crisis assistance and extending protection to victims of sexual violence.

Bill Status as of May 1, 2009—The bill passed the Illinois House of Representatives on March 27<sup>th</sup> and passed the Senate Human Services Committee on April 29<sup>th</sup>. The Senate will vote on the bill soon. To check on the bill's updated status, visit the Illinois General Assembly website at [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov).

**TAKE ACTION NOW**—Please call (Springfield office phone number is best), email, or write to members of the Illinois Senate, both Democrats and Republicans, and ask them to vote in favor of HB 2383 when it is called for a vote on the Senate floor. For contact information for your Illinois state senator, go to [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org).

For more information about HB 2383, please contact the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, [danlessner@povertylaw.org](mailto:danlessner@povertylaw.org), [jenniferhrycyna@povertylaw.org](mailto:jenniferhrycyna@povertylaw.org), or [mstapleton@povertylaw.org](mailto:mstapleton@povertylaw.org).

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