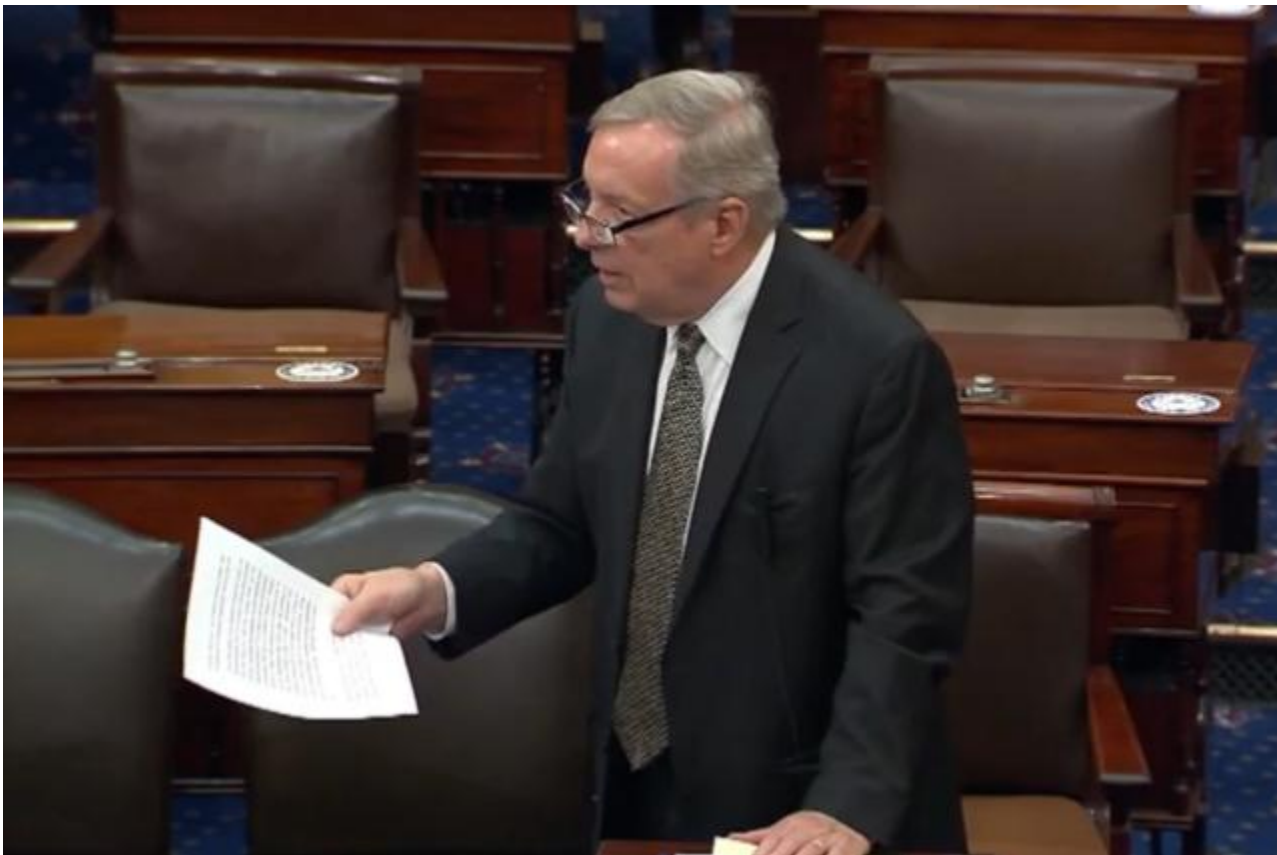


Durbin Calls For Unanimous Passage Of Bipartisan & Bicameral Legislation To Sustain Crime Victims Fund - Senator Pat Toomey Objects

June 24 2021 8:49 AM



WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, today on the Senate floor requested unanimous consent to pass the bipartisan *VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act*, which would strengthen the *Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)* by fixing how the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) is

funded. Specifically, the bill would redirect monetary penalties from federal deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements into the CVF to increase funding for state victim compensation and assistance programs and grants to victims service providers.

Durbin highlighted the work that the VOCA-funded Harbor House, serving Kankakee and Iroquois Counties in Illinois, does to assist victims of domestic violence. In 2019, [Harbor House](#) assisted domestic violence survivors with more than 193 orders of protection. They housed 99 individuals fleeing domestic violence, provided 3,140 nights of shelter for survivors and their children, and they answered more than 3,900 hotline calls.

“What happens to these women who are the victims of domestic violence and abuse?... What happens to their kids who witness these acts of violence in the home?” Durbin said. “Through VOCA, the , we send money to Harbor House, Life Span, and other agencies and say, ‘Do your best. Help them put their lives back together again. Protect them,’” Durbin said.

Deposits into the CVF are historically low. The decrease is due in large part to greater use of deferred prosecutions and non-prosecution agreements—monetary penalties associated with these prosecutions are currently deposited into the General Treasury, not the CVF.

“Our bill would stabilize the depleted Fund by redirecting monetary penalties from deferred prosecutions and non-prosecution agreements to the victims and service providers that need the help,” Durbin said. “We don’t have any time to waste. Every day that goes by, we miss an opportunity to help replenish the Fund and to put these services on the street. So far this year, the Fund has already missed out on a total of nearly \$550 million in deposits that could be helping these agencies, and we’re not even halfway through the year.”

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) joined Senator Durbin in making the request. For the second week in a row, Senator Pat Toomey (R-PA) objected to the request.

Video of Durbin’s remarks on the Senate floor is available [here](#).

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In 1984, VOCA established the CVF, which provides grant funding for state victim compensation and assistance programs. Grants are awarded to states, local governments, individuals, and other entities by the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Office for Victims of Crime. The CVF does not receive appropriated funding, and instead receives most money through deposits from criminal fines; as a result, deposits fluctuate annually

based on cases that the DOJ prosecutes. Additionally, money from forfeited appearance bonds, penalties, and special assessments collected by U.S. Attorneys Offices, federal courts, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons is also deposited into the CVF.

Due to the rapidly diminishing balance in the CVF, victim services are already being slashed in states across the country, and some programs and services may see close to a 100 percent cut within two years if Congress does not act. In Illinois, VOCA victim assistance grant awards went from nearly \$129 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 to approximately \$41 million in FY2021—a nearly 70 percent reduction from FY2018. Organizations are preparing for significant further cuts that will force them to layoff VOCA-funded staff who provide critical services to survivors, including counselors, advocates, and lawyers. VOCA cuts would also impact the ability of states to compensate victims; for example, Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul shared that the state’s “Crime Victims’ Compensation Bureau receives approximately 3,000 applications for compensation annually,” and that “VOCA funds allow the Illinois Attorney General’s office to reimburse families for counseling expenses, medical bills, lost wages and so much more.”

The VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act, introduced by Durbin and Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), has wide support from the victims’ rights and law enforcement groups, including the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the National District Attorneys Association, the National Network to End Domestic Violence, and the National Association of Attorneys General.

The bill would:

- Direct federal criminal settlements from Federal non-prosecution and deferred prosecution agreements, currently deposited into the General Treasury, into the CVF (known as the “deposits fix,” this change would be the most significant and could make an additional \$4–\$7 billion of non-taxpayer money available to the CVF);
- Increase the percentage that state compensation programs are reimbursed by the Federal government from 60 to 75 percent;
- Allow states to apply for a no-cost extension for VOCA assistance grants;
- Give states the ability to waive subgrantee match requirements for VOCA assistance grants; and
- Provide additional flexibility for state victim compensation programs to provide compensation for victims, even if they do not interact with law enforcement.