VAWA Is an Excellent Target for Spending Cuts

by Phyllis Schlafly February 4, 2011

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While the U.S. House is trying to figure out how to cut wasteful and/or extravagant federal spending, Members should be mindful of Reagan's advice to begin by cutting programs that are harmful. One that fits this definition is the billion-dollar-a-year Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), now up for re-authorization.

This week is the 18th anniversary of an event that precipitated passage of VAWA in 1994. It's known as the Super Bowl Hoax, the assertion made on January 28, 1993 in Pasadena, California, with fulsome media coverage, that more women are victims of domestic violence on Super Bowl Sunday than any other day of the year.

That radical feminist fairy tale lacked even a shred of truth. It was designed to feed the feminist anti-male and anti-masculine prejudices that men are naturally batterers, women are naturally victims, sports fans are prone to aggression and macho posturing, and football is especially guilty.

Reinforcing this non-news-story was an appearance on Good Morning America by Lenore Walker to regurgitate her then 14-year-old book called "The Battered Woman." It is credited with originating what is known as the "battered woman syndrome," which spread the propaganda that batterers are always men, the battered are always women, and the definition of domestic violence includes acts and words that are not violent.

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Feminist political correctness demands that we accept these gender-specific notions while at the same time denying any other innate male-female differences. Larry Summers was driven out of the Harvard University presidency for daring to suggest that we might research possible gender differences between men and women in math and science.

NBC joined the propaganda push by airing a public service announcement before the 1993 super bowl to remind men that domestic violence is a crime. The original feminist news release, plus all its "legs" (a favorite media word), was later conclusively proved false by the scholar Christina Hoff Sommers.

Of course, real domestic violence exists, and is a crime, and should be punished. However, this issue raises constitutional problems that domestic violence has come to mean whatever a woman alleges, with or without evidence, and men often lose their presumption of innocence and right to confront their accusers.

The fiscal problem is that a billion dollars a year are streaming into the hands of leftwing feminists to pursue their agenda, which does not include preserving or restoring marriage. Taxpayers' funds are used to lobby for feminist legislation, to train law enforcement and judicial personnel in feminist ideology and in the aggressive enforcement of feminist laws, and to break up families instead of giving them pro-family and anti-substance-abuse counseling.

The VAWA appropriation is only the start of its high cost to taxpayers and society. When marriages are broken by false allegations of domestic violence, U.S. taxpayers fork up an estimated $20 billion a year to support the resulting single-parent, welfare-dependent families.

The total annual taxpayer costs for federal poverty programs arising from family fragmentation and fatherlessness are at least $100 billion. We should establish rigorous accountability for how the taxpayers' money is spent for domestic violence and evaluate the results of the spending.

An organization called SAVE (Stop Abusive and Violent Environments) has identified VAWA's major shortcomings. SAVE also offers some less-costly solutions for domestic problems.

Other proposals include requiring proof of physical violence or credible evidence of imminent violence, and removing funds from persons who are "gaming" the system so funds can be directed to enhance services for true victims. Taxpayers should not have to fund special-interest feminist lobbying, support for enforcement of counterproductive feminist legislation, or training and public awareness programs until they have been reviewed and shown to be accurate and truthful.

One example of VAWA funding doing actual harm is the lobbying to enact state laws requiring mandatory arrest and training the criminal justice system to pursue aggressive enforcement. A Harvard University study of mandatory-arrest laws in 15 states found that they increased partner homicides by 57 percent.

In the interest of truth, SAVE has set up a Training, Education, and Public Awareness (TEPA) program. The hope is that taxpayer funding will be suspended for any domestic violence educational program that lacks TEPA accreditation, a process that should eliminate the fake statistics that have plagued this issue.

SAVE estimates that these VAWA reforms can shave a significant sum off the federal deficit. Some may say that's "chicken feed" in the big picture of cutting the budget, but these cuts will enable us to do a better job for true victims as well as save money.