

*Today U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (IL-05) gave the following speech during debate of his amendments to the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2012 (H.R.4970) to provide protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals who are victims of violent crime. For more information on the amendment, please [click here](#).*

"Thank you Mr. Chairman.

"Every few years we need to reauthorize VAWA in order to update the laws on the books, to reflect issues raised by those experiencing and addressing domestic violence.

"It's been seven years since VAWA was reauthorized, and in that time, experts and service providers have gathered data and determined that certain groups are not being adequately protected.

"Specifically, hundreds of service providers, law enforcement officers, and advocates from around the country have informed us that greater protections are needed for immigrants, tribal members and LGBT victims.

"The bipartisan Senate bill provides improved protections for these vulnerable populations.

"Sadly, the bill before us to today does not.

"Therefore, I am offering an amendment that would restore a vital provision, necessary to protect gay, lesbian, bi- and transsexual individuals from discrimination and ensure they are receiving the services they need.

"My amendment mirrors the bipartisan Senate language, which included "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" in the definition of "underserved communities."

"Why is this important? Just ask Alma.

"A transgender woman named Alma moved in with her boyfriend Tony; but shortly after moving in, Tony began to punch Alma and tell her to take it like a man.

"Alma asked him to stop, but Tony only hit her harder.

"Neighbors called the police multiple times, but they never arrested Tony because they said the fighting was between two men and wasn't domestic violence.

"One night Alma threatened to report Tony to the police, and he responded by beating her severely.

"She finally escaped to the hospital, where they referred to her to a domestic violence program.

"But the domestic violence program told her that they could not help "people like her," and suggested she call her family.

"Sadly, Alma's family had disowned her years ago when she discussed her gender identity with them.

"Discrimination is real.

"My amendment will ensure LGBT victims are explicitly included, and targeted for specialized services to help both victims and service providers overcome hurdles to care.

"The bill before us today reauthorizes a new grant program for service providers engaged in outreach activities and administering services to "Underserved Populations."

"These underserved populations are those who face barriers to accessing services -

"And the grant funds provided through this program will help organizations develop and implement outreach strategies to those who face hurdles to care.

"LGBT victims fit the definition of underserved communities perfectly, and are in desperate need of the specialized assistance this new grant program would provide.

"LGBT relationships experience domestic violence at the same rates as the general population – 25-33 percent.

'Yet only one in five survivors of same-gender sexual assault and intimate partner violence receives victim services.

"LGBT victims are severely underserved, with 45 percent of LGBT survivors being turned away from domestic violence shelters -

"And nearly 55 percent of LGBT survivors are denied when seeking an order of protection.

"According to a 2010 study, *96 percent* of victim services and law enforcement agencies said

they did not have specific services for LGBTQ victims.

"If this isn't the definition of underserved then I don't know what is.

"Like all victims of domestic violence, LGBT victims fear reporting their abuse - yet LGBT victims face a special set of concerns.

"For instance, they may fear of being "outed" to their friends, family or employer.

"In some states without civil right protections, LGBT individuals can be fired for being who they are.

"And in states without same-sex adoption, an LGBT individual who leaves his or her partner to escape abuse must fear losing access to his or her children.

"Domestic violence affects people from all walks of life, whether they are gay, straight, immigrants or tribal members.

"Everyone deserves to be protected.

"Sadly the bill being considered by the committee today fails to meet the mark.

"But it's not too late.

"We can fix this bill.

"We can reach across the aisle.

"I encourage my colleagues to vote for my amendment, vote for inclusion, and vote to protect ALL victims of domestic violence."