

ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Senator Janet Howell was honored to be named **National Child Advocate of 2006** by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Janet is the Senate leader in preventing family violence and child abuse. Her efforts led to Virginia's Megan's Law and put information about violent sex offenders on the Internet. Because of her anti-stalking and sexual assault bills, **The Washington Post** called Janet "a leader in efforts to toughen laws dealing with sex crimes." The Virginia Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), the Virginia Sheriffs Association, and the Chiefs of Police have all called her Senator of the Year. Jim and Sarah Brady endorsed her because of her leadership for reasonable gun control.

GUN CONTROL

When Jim and Sarah Brady endorsed me for re-election, it was a high point of my political career. And when Jim Brady put side his prepared remarks and spoke for the heart about how much my efforts on behalf of reasonable gun control meant to him, it was a high point of my personal life as well. I know the anguish and pain caused by gun violence. In 1996, my father-in-law was murdered by an intruder with a handgun. Nothing is more fundamental to the well being of a society than the safety of its citizens. Responsible gun control measures are needed now in our state.

I am fighting for several gun control measures:

- Requiring background checks on all individuals who purchase firearms in Virginia through gun shows, newspaper ads, and flea markets.
- Prohibiting guns in public buildings such as police stations, recreation centers, public parks, and mental health facilities.
- Prohibiting the transfer of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons to persons under 21.
- Requiring all new handguns be sold with a child-proof device.
- Closing the loophole that allows juveniles to purchase and possess certain assault weapons.
- Fighting to preserve the gun control measures we currently have.

PROTECTING OUR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Among the most difficult problems facing us is preventing harm to our families and children. I have worked hard as your Senator to prevent crime and reduce the anguish of victims. I have met with family members of homicide victims, with survivors of incest, and with abused spouses and their children. And I have worked with them to stop the violence. Being in the Senate has given me the opportunity to make a difference--and I

have used that opportunity to change Virginia's approach to both family violence and sexual violence.

PREVENTING VIOLENCE IN OUR FAMILIES

As Chairman of Virginia's Commission for Family Violence Prevention, I took the lead in overhauling the state's approach to this prevalent problem. Our best estimates are that one in seven families has domestic violence issues and one in fourteen has actual physical abuse. More women go to the emergency room for injuries inflicted by people they know than from car accidents. More women are murdered by those they know than by strangers. Virginia has taken the lead in making it clear that perpetrators of such crimes will be punished.

My Omnibus Family Violence Bill completely revamped Virginia's approach and legal requirements. A pro-arrest policy was implemented: when there is probable cause of assault and battery against a family member, police are required to make an arrest or document the reasons they didn't do so. The victim is given information on services available. Emergency protective orders are issued. Every locality must have a plan in place to deal with domestic violence.

Victims of domestic violence need services to help them make informed choices about their options. My budget amendments added services such as housing and counseling for those victims and their children.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY AND INTERNET NOTIFICATION

In 1997, I introduced legislation that greatly expanded Virginia's sexual offender registry and opened it to the public. In 1998, I introduced our Megan's Law, which put the names, addresses, and photos of violent sexual predators on the internet. More than 6 million people have visited the site since it was activated by the State Police. (A link to State Police website is provided on my page.) The public needs to know who in their neighborhoods have been convicted of violent sexual offenses and crimes against children. But such information is only one facet of needed actions.

I succeeded in expanding Virginia's efforts to prevent the violence:

- Increasing prison terms for sex crimes.
- Starting treatment programs for sex offenders while they are in prison.
- Having the assessment tools and personnel available to determine the best treatment for them.
- Keeping offenders under close supervision while they are on probation or parole.
- Creating model programs for offenders after they are no longer under Department of Corrections supervision.

- Heading crime commission panel which crafted Virginia's law to civilly commit violent sexual offenders.
- There is much more to be done to help victims of sexual violence, especially child victims. I am now fighting for advocacy centers for child victims of sexual abuse. These centers would provide counseling for the children and their families, medical treatment, and legal advice.

STOPPING STALKERS

Every woman fears being stalked. Police increasingly recognize how dangerous stalkers are. At the request of police and women's groups, I introduced anti-stalking legislation. My bill greatly expanded the definition of stalking, increased the penalty and extended protective orders. Because of these efforts, more stalking prosecutions are going to trial and more stalkers are being convicted.

VICTIMS' RIGHTS

During the past few years, our society has recognized how poorly we have treated victims. I have worked to improve the treatment of victims by fighting for a Constitutional Amendment in Virginia dealing with Victims' Rights. The voters of the Commonwealth approved this amendment.

I am chief patron of two bills that expanded victims' rights. Victims of felonies will be notified when the felon is released from jail or prison. Also, my legislation requires police officers to give all victims of felonies information about their rights and the services available to them.

AWARDS FOR CRIME PREVENTION

Numerous victims' organizations have recognized my efforts on their behalf. The Fraternal Order of Police, the Virginia Association of Sheriffs, and the Chiefs of Police have all honored me. I am very grateful for these honors; however, the real reward is knowing that there are fewer victims of violence as a result of my efforts.