

The Crime Victims with Disabilities Act of 2008

*Statement of Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
October 1, 2008*

Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Crime Victims with Disabilities Act of 2008.

Adults with disabilities experience violence or abuse at least twice as often as people without disabilities, and adults with developmental disabilities are at risk of being physically or sexually assaulted at rates four to ten times greater than other adults. In fact, an estimated 5 million crimes are committed annually against persons with developmental disabilities and an estimated 70 percent of these crimes are not reported.

Adding insult to injury, individuals with disabilities suffer additional “victimization” within the justice system, due to lack of physical, programmatic, and communications accommodations needed for equal access.

The Crime Victims with Disabilities Act takes a common sense approach to fixing this problem by providing funds to increase the investigation, prosecution, and prevention of crimes against persons with disabilities and by facilitating collaboration among criminal justice agencies and other agencies and organizations that provide services to people with disabilities to improve services to those who are victimized.

Collaboration among criminal justice agencies and agencies and organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities is necessary to ensure that crimes are reported and investigated properly, prosecutors are properly trained, appropriate accommodations are provided to disabled victims, and communication between criminal justice agencies and organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities is effective.

The bill funds a modest grant program that would allow States, units of local government, and Indian Tribes to develop programs to

facilitate collaboration among criminal justice agencies and agencies and organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities for these purposes. The bill authorizes \$50,000 for each planning grant and \$300,000 for each implementation grant for a total authorization for the grant program of \$10 million for the first year.

The bill also authorizes \$4 million over four years to fund research to assist the Attorney General in collecting valid, reliable national data relating to crimes against individuals with developmental and related disabilities for the National Crime Victims Survey conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics of the Department of Justice as required by the Crime Victims with Disabilities Awareness Act. Currently, the Bureau of Justice Statistics does not specifically collect this data, leaving many crimes against persons with disabilities unreported in the survey and making it difficult to address this problem adequately.

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities, the National Center for Victims of Crime, the National Council on Independent Living, the National Disability Rights Network, the National Child Abuse Coalition, Easter Seals, the Arc of the United States, and United Cerebral Palsy have endorsed the bill. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this bill which will protect some of the most vulnerable members of our society – individuals with disabilities who are victims of crime.