BETTY McCOLLUM
4TH DISTRICT, MINNESOTA

1714 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-6631
FAX: (202) 225-1968

165 WESTERN AVENUE NORTH
SUITE 17
ST. PAUL, MN 55102
(651) 224-9191
FAX: (651) 224-3056

www.house.gov/mccollum

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Congresswoman Betty McCollum
Statement for the Record
15th Anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act (H.Res. 738)
September 14, 2009

Ms. McCOLLUM: Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.Res. 738, a resolution honoring the 15th Anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). I am an original cosponsor of this resolution to support the goals and ideals of VAWA. Today we recognize the progress that has been made in reducing domestic violence in our country but also the significant work that remains.

In 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) began creating safe havens for families affected by domestic violence. This historic legislation has succeeded in making America's women more safe and secure and it has strengthened America's response to the crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Victims of domestic violence are now more able to access services and counseling during their darkest hours and prosecutors have the tools to pursue perpetrators. VAWA is working to bring communities together by coordinating law enforcement officers, victim advocates and prosecutors.

No one should have to live in fear or suffer in silence from domestic violence. We as society must provide sufficient resources to federal, state and local law enforcement officers and prosecutors who specialize in crimes targeted against women. We must also support organizations that offer services to women and families who have experienced violence.

Domestic violence hurts families and entire communities. The communities of Minnesota's Fourth District learned this all too well on September 7, 2009, when North St. Paul police officer Richard Crittenden and Maplewood police officer Julie Olson answered a domestic violence call – one of the most dangerous an officer can receive. Officer Richard Crittenden was killed and Officer Olson was injured in the line of duty. Officer Crittenden made the ultimate sacrifice – his life – to protect a women from a man who had repeatedly abused her.

Madam speaker, at this time I would like to acknowledge all those who work to reduce domestic violence in communities across our country. Much has been accomplished in the last fifteen years, but the number of incidents of violence against women still remains too high. On this anniversary, I urge my colleagues to recommit themselves to ending domestic violence.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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