Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C. 20530

January 4, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, EOUSA
ALL UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

SUBJECT: Federal Efforts to Improve the Safety of Domestic Violence Victims

Ending the scourge of violence against women in our society has been and continues to be a priority of the Department. Since the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994, and its subsequent amendments, the United States Attorneys' Offices (USAOs) have actively prosecuted cases involving interstate domestic violence, interstate violation of a protection order, interstate stalking and cyber-stalking, firearm possession by a person subject to a protection order, and firearm possession by a person convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence. See 18 U.S.C. §§ 922(g)(8), 922(g)(9), 2261, 2261A, and 2262. Continued aggressive enforcement of laws designed to help combat domestic violence, particularly those laws related to illegal firearm possession, is an important responsibility of the USAOs.

Complementing these enforcement efforts, the USAOs have also engaged in outreach, coordination, and training with state, local, and tribal law enforcement partners, community groups, and victim advocacy groups to highlight the ongoing problem of domestic violence and to raise awareness of the federal resources available to help victims of this pernicious crime. For example:

- USAOs have sponsored or co-sponsored trainings specifically targeting violence against women. The agendas for these events have included discussions of law enforcement best practices, federal domestic violence resources, and safety and survival skills for domestic violence victims.

- USAOs have worked with state, local, and tribal law enforcement and community partners on tribal implementation of the VAWA 2013 amendments, which allow for special tribal criminal domestic violence jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders.

- USAOs have met with their local prosecutorial counterparts, as well as domestic violence advocacy organizations, to determine how best to utilize federal criminal remedies and to ensure, in particular, that state and tribal protection orders and state and tribal misdemeanors qualify as predicates under federal firearm prohibitions.

- USAOs have participated in domestic violence forums and meetings within their communities to collaborate on ways to prevent the violence and to provide services and assistance to victims.

- USAOs participated in events organized by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the passage of VAWA. OVW conducted a domestic violence awareness campaign which included visits to numerous communities across the country. Each visit included a roundtable conversation and listening session with city officials, local law enforcement, local victim service providers, and members of the coordinated community response team, including state STOP/SASP administrators, state coalition directors, culturally specific community-based organizations, and other identified stakeholders. USAO participation greatly enhanced these events and strengthened the working relationships between USAOs and the domestic violence community.

- The Attorney General Guidelines for Victim and Witness Assistance set forth protocols for USAOs to follow in order to help enforce victims' rights and better serve victims. The Guidelines outline rights, services, and referrals for all crime victims and expectations on the fair treatment of victims. Further, the Guidelines specifically discuss the importance of victims' rights and services for victims of domestic violence and mandate that Department personnel make the safety of these victims and their children a high priority. USAOs carry out this duty through such acts as making referrals to assist these victims in developing personal safety plans and ensuring that USAO actions respect the privacy and dignity of these victims.

These collective efforts have improved the lives of domestic violence victims and made our communities safer. I commend you for your impressive work and encourage you to build on your partnerships with state, local, and tribal law enforcement and community groups to stop domestic violence. In particular, I ask that you redouble your efforts to work with these partners to prevent prohibited persons from obtaining firearms. Your efforts have made and will continue to make a great difference for the victims who too often suffer in silence.