Aug 24, 2020

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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Urges Congress to Expand Funding for Crime Victims

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody and a bipartisan coalition of state and territorial attorneys general representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories are urging Congress to adopt key changes to the Victims of Crime Act that provide critical financial support to victims of violent crimes and their families.

In a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer and the House and Senate Judiciary Committees, the attorneys general call on Congress to adopt changes to the Crime Victims Fund, a national fund that supports state victims' services programs. The recommendations will stabilize the fund's finances and provide more flexibility to grantees who are providing services to victims and their families.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Crime victims are often left with hardships in the aftermath of a crime. Worrying about paying medical or housing bills, lost wages or property damage as a direct result of crime should not be a burden victims are left to face alone. It is crucial that Congress act now to stabilize the Crime Victims Fund so our office and the offices of my fellow attorneys general can continue to provide financial support to crime victims and their families."

To view the letter, click here.

The fund, established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984, is the primary funding source for victim services in all 50 states and six U.S. territories. Deposits to the fund originate from criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalties and special assessments collected by U.S. Attorneys' Offices, federal courts and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The fund covers the expenses of essential direct services and support for victims and survivors in the aftermath of crime, including medical care, mental health counseling, lost wages, courtroom advocacy and temporary housing.

The financial health of fund is at risk. In 2015, Congress increased the cap on distributions to the fund, allowing 2.5 million more victims to receive support. According to the letter, while deposits have sharply decreased in recent years due to a decline in the fines and penalties recouped from federal criminal cases, withdrawals have increased at a rapid pace.

The coalition makes three recommendations to promote the sustainability of the fund, and preserve access to programs and services:

- Redirect fines and fees from corporate deferred and non-prosecution agreements to the fund: The Department of Justice increasingly uses deferred and non-prosecution agreements to resolve corporate misconduct. The attorneys general ask Congress to redirect these deposits to the fund. In 2018 and 2019, recoveries resulting from these agreements were about $8 billion each year;
- Extend the amount of time VOCA funds can be spent: VOCA requires recipients to spend grants within a four-year period. The coalition asks Congress to extend the period of funding so that state and local organizations can better plan and predict funding for long-term services; and
- Increase the rate of federal reimbursement to states for victim compensation programs: The fund currently reimburses state programs that provide financial assistance to victims at a rate of 60%, the remainder usually being funded by fines and fees in state courts. The letter recommends Congress reimburse state programs at a rate of 75%.

Earlier this month, Attorney General Moody sent a letter to Florida Senators Marco Rubio and Rick Scott explaining the importance of increasing the federal reimbursement rate and urging support for VOCA rate increase legislation.

To view the letter, click here.

Joining Attorney General Moody in the letter are the attorneys general of Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, the Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.