Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2006

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House Of Representatives, H-309, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf,

As you begin the difficult task of drafting the Fiscal Year 2007 Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully request your continued support for funding for the Bureau of Justice Assistance Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (SAVIN) grants program.

Automated victim notification provides victims of domestic violence and other violent crimes 24 hour-access to information about the custody status of offenders. Victims can call a toll-free number to check on the custody status of an offender and can register by phone to be notified automatically when an offender is released, is transferred, or escapes. By providing free, accurate, up-to-date information to crime victims, automated victim notification programs help victims feel more secure. More importantly, automated victim notification saves lives by alerting victims to take special precautions when dangerous attackers are released from jail.

The federal government recognizes the importance of automated victim notification and in fact, the U.S. Department of Justice has operated its Federal Victim Notification Service (VNS) since 1999. The VNS provides victims of federal crimes who are registered with the U.S. Department of Justice automated notification when the custody status of the victim's offender changes.

Nineteen states have already implemented statewide automatic victim notification programs, but unfortunately, this national automated victim notification network remains incomplete. Only about 65 percent of the nation's local jails participate in automated victim notification programs. Some states have no victim notification service at all; in others, only one or two large counties provide the service. As a result, hundreds of thousands of state crime victims across the country do not have access to an automated victim notification program.

Fortunately, the Committee has recognized the importance of statewide automatic victim notification programs. In Fiscal Year 2005, the Committee provided $8 million to the Bureau of Justice Assistance for this SAVIN program, and renewed the program with an appropriation of $9 million in the Fiscal Year 2006 budget. To date, 16 states—including Virginia—have been awarded grants under the BJA SAVIN program to develop new statewide victim notification programs or to expand existing programs. The BJA SAVIN program requires a 50% match from the state and provides funding only for the startup and initial operation of the state's SAVIN

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program. Once the initial 24-month period is completed, the state is responsible for the ongoing funding of its SAVIN program.

We believe that every victim of domestic violence and other violent crime in America should have access to the safety and security offered by automated victim notification. We hope that the Committee will support this life-saving program in Fiscal Year 2007.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact Mike Biagi of Representative's Northup's staff at (202) 225-5401 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Anne Northup
Member of Congress

Ted Poe
Member of Congress

Dave Reichert
Member of Congress