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AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS,
PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONSE

STATEMENT OF
CONGRESSWOMAN LAURA RICHARDSON OF CALIFORNIA

URGING COMMITTEE TO REFRAIN FROM REPORTING A CLOSED
RULE FOR H.R. 4970
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

MAY 15, 2012

Chairman Dreier, Ranking Member Slaughter and Members of the Committee on Rules:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today and address Democratic concerns that you may report a closed rule for H.R. 4970, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

The House Judiciary Committee last week reported out its version of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, and as we are all well aware the House version unfortunately omits improvements the Senate bill implemented in their version. What is worse is that the House version in its current form removes existing protections for immigrant women, and puts them at greater risk of domestic and sexual abuse, and it does not provide adequate and equal protection for tribal women and the LGBT community.

For nearly two decades now, Democrats have firmly supported the Violence Against Women Act and the critical assistance it has provided for women, men, and children, and have worked with Republicans to ensure its reauthorization twice in the past.

Unfortunately, since Republicans have taken over the House, notions of bipartisanship have become old news and untenable. Republicans have continually played partisan politics and refused to compromise in an effort to move this country forward, and here we are again with another clear example of that. Reporting a closed rule for H.R. 4970 would be another example of shutting Democrats out of the legislation process by ruling out any opportunity for Democrats to amend the bill, and although that should never be acceptable, in this instance it would have devastating consequences to millions of American women. A closed rule would promote the Republican attack against women and approve of legislation that is intended to silence the cries of millions of women around our country.

Mr. Chairman, VAWA has never been and should never be a partisan issue. It is astonishing how the Republican majority has lost sight of our purpose as lawmakers. We have been trusted with the responsibility of protecting society and ensuring justice to victims. Democrats and Republicans have always worked together to reauthorize VAWA since its original passage in 1994. But that is not the case today. Republicans have completely shut out Democrats and now do not even want to allow for the possibility of a bipartisan consensus. This is obviously a sad attempt to flip the script and say that Democrats did not support the VAWA reauthorization, when the real reason is because Republicans have stripped the bill of vital protections VAWA has provided immigrant victims, tribal women and the LGBT community for the past 18 years. VAWA if considered under a closed rule would place immigrant victims, tribal women and the LGBT community in a more vulnerable position than under current law.

As the representative of California's 37th District I must insist on an open rule or modified rule that would allow for much needed amendments that would protect some of the most vulnerable victims in my district.

Thank you. I yield back.