



DEBRA BOWEN

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Secretary of State Debra Bowen Calls Attention to Domestic Violence, Key Service for Survivors

SACRAMENTO – Secretary of State Debra Bowen today reminded Californians of the importance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, which begins October 1.

“Domestic Violence Awareness Month is a bittersweet time of the year,” said Secretary Bowen. “I always first think of the women, men and children who have escaped abuse or stalking and now live free of fear. But it is also a reminder that there are thousands of people who are still being hurt and intimidated, and either don’t know how to get help or are too afraid to ask for it.”

Domestic violence is the single largest cause of injury to American women between the ages of 15 and 44. An estimated 5.8% of California women experience domestic violence each year. It crosses ethnic, racial, national origin, gender, socioeconomic, age, sexual orientation and religious lines. Besides the obvious human toll it takes, domestic violence also strains the health and welfare systems, and is a leading contributor to homelessness.

“The Secretary of State’s landmark Safe at Home program helps protect survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking from their abusers,” continued Bowen. “Since its inception nine years ago, the Safe at Home confidential address program has helped more than 3,700 families start new lives free of fear. Safe at Home staff work with dozens of enrolling agencies in every corner of the state, from county district attorneys’ offices to health clinics and women’s shelters, to protect the identities of eligible program participants through confidential mail forwarding, voter registration and more.”

Twenty-eight states have confidential mail-forwarding programs but the more robust California’s Safe at Home is widely considered to be the national model. Currently, approximately 2,500 people are enrolled in Safe at Home, most of whom are women and children.

As a legislator, Secretary Bowen authored several pieces of legislation to help keep Californians safe from domestic violence. Her Senate Bill 1062 (2006) added sexual assault victims to the list of eligible Safe at Home participants and her SB 1743 (2006) made it possible for Safe at Home participants to obtain confidential name changes without having their requests published in local newspapers.

For more information about Safe at Home and a county-by-county list of enrolling agencies, visit <http://www.sos.ca.gov/safeathome/>.

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