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Thursday, February 28, 2013  
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## Chairman Hastings Statement on the Violence Against Women Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) released the following statement on the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA):

*“During my service in Congress representing Central Washington, I have always voted to renew the Violence Against Women Act. As a husband, a father, and a grandfather, I strongly believe that providing protection for all women against domestic violence is a duty and a priority. Yet I am deeply dismayed by the manner in which the current reauthorization of this legislation, which has long been a simple grant program, has been hijacked in order to pursue unrelated political agendas in very harsh politicized terms.*

*“To be blunt, the bill that passed today is simply unconstitutional. It violates Constitutional rights of individuals and would, for the first time ever, proclaim Indian tribes’ ‘inherent’ authority to exercise criminal jurisdiction over non-Indian citizens. The Supreme Court has ruled multiple times that tribes do not have this authority.*

*“In a tribal court, Constitutional protections and the Bill of Rights do not apply. Under the bill, a non-Indian citizen tried in a tribal court has no right to appeal to a federal court, lacks the guarantee of due process, has no right to an impartial trial by jury of one’s peers, and more. A vote in favor of the bill was a vote to deny U.S. citizens their Bill of Rights.*

*“There is no doubt the bill will be struck down in court. This would result in guilty offenders going unpunished, while women are delayed from getting the help and justice they deserve.*

*“The manner in which this bill has been considered by Congress has been far from deliberate. In fact, it can best be described as a political stampede. Some of the most fundamental individual rights of American citizens guaranteed by the Constitution and particularly the Bill of Rights are being trampled. Thoughtful questions and genuine efforts to propose Constitutional means of protecting Indian women from abuse have invited harsh, highly-politicized attacks that one actually does not object to, and perhaps even favors, such horrible crimes. According to the well-known adage, George Washington explained to Thomas Jefferson that he supported creation of the Senate to serve a purpose similar to pouring tea into a saucer to cool it before drinking. That legislation is poured into the Senate saucer to cool it. The reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act has become so highly politicized that it proved too hot for the Senate saucer and for the People’s House.*

*“While I fully support the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, I could not vote for a bill that denies basic rights, is unconstitutional and will be tied up in court challenges for years.”*

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