

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Negotiated Rulemaking Committee Meetings

Opening Remarks of
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- Good morning. My name is Brenda Dann-Messier, and I am the Acting Assistant Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education here at the Department of Education.
- Welcome to the Department and to the first of three negotiating sessions that will focus on developing new regulations that will implement the parts of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that amend the Clery Act.
- Since VAWA was signed by President Obama in March of last year, developing and implementing regulations has been a high priority for the Department of Education.
- Our Administration is deeply concerned about the prevalence of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking at our Nation's colleges and universities.
 - Even one such incident of violence is one incident too many. We know that students cannot be successful if they do not feel safe and welcome on campus.
 - That's why Secretary Duncan has repeatedly stressed his strong and unwavering commitment to eradicating sexual violence and harassment from our nation's institutions of higher education and ensuring that all campuses are safe places for *all* students to learn and grow.
 - As Secretary Duncan has also noted, the start of today's negotiated rulemaking session is a particularly important step in these efforts.
- As part of this rulemaking, we are committed to providing an open and transparent process while keeping in mind that the issues on which we will be negotiating are complex and emotionally charged.

- Our goal is to learn from the diverse viewpoints at the table and from the public, and to work together to craft a rule that will ensure that colleges and universities across the country take action to prevent and respond promptly and effectively to incidents of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking when they occur.
 - With this in mind, we wish to focus our efforts on creating a rule that respects the right of all students to a safe environment, fair and equal treatment, and due process.
 - Ultimately, our aim is that this rulemaking will bring us a step closer to ensuring that all institutions of higher education in our country are safe places where all students can pursue their education free of sexual violence and harassment.
 - During this process, we also seek to create clear and manageable guidelines for institutions of higher education. It is our goal to implement effective policies with a minimum of burden on those charged with carrying them out.
- Those of you around the negotiating table represent years of experience and extraordinary dedication to ensuring the safety of our nation's students.
 - You have already been very helpful to us in the conversations leading up to this session, and we look forward to continued collaboration with you.
 - The work that you are doing today is critical to the development of sound regulations that will promote the creation of safe environments on college campuses across the country.
 - We are grateful to all of you for your willingness to share your collective knowledge with us as we work through these challenging issues, and on behalf of Secretary Duncan, thank you for participating in this important rulemaking, and for sharing your expertise and experience with us.