

The Opinion Page

Promoting Campus Safety

POTSDAM - Education - particularly higher education - is one of the chief economic drivers in St. Lawrence County. A college education has increasingly become a prerequisite for many career paths and for life-long economic security.

Creating a safe and welcoming environment for students is critical to ensuring student get their degrees.

When campus environments are hostile because of sexual harassment, assault, or violence, students cannot learn and miss out on true educational opportunities.

Over the last decade, AAUW's research has revealed that 83 percent of girls and 79 percent of boys reported having experienced sexual harassment, and over one in four students stated that harassment happens "often."

A 2007 campus sexual-assault study by the U.S. Department of Justice found that around 28 percent of women are targets of attempted or completed sexual assault while they are college students. The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) reports that college-age women are four times more likely than any other age group to face sexual assault.

Yet, fewer than 5 percent of rapes and attempted rapes of college students are reported to campus authorities or law enforcement. Investigative

reporting by the Center for Public Integrity reveals many barriers to reporting sexual assault, including inadequate sexual-assault policies. As a result, the problem remains under the surface on campuses nationwide making it difficult to proactively prevent and effectively respond after the fact.

The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination (SaVE) Act (H.R. 2016) has been introduced in Congress to address this issue. This bill would help to end sexual assault and violence on campus by requiring schools to spell out their policies, conduct prevention activities, and ensure necessary assistance for victims.

The Campus SaVE Act amends the Clery Act, the landmark federal law requiring colleges and universities across the United States to disclose information about crime on and around their campuses.

The Campus SaVE Act will ensure that institutions of higher education have comprehensive procedures in place to address domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

The bill also promotes prevention programs on campus that focus on teaching male and female students alike that they can help to prevent sexual violence.

The Campus SaVE Act will ensure that information on

best practices about preventing and responding to incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking, including institutional policies are disseminated to colleges and universities.

The members of the St. Lawrence County Branch of AAUW urge Congressman Bill Owens to cosponsor the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination (SaVE) Act (H.R. 2016).

This bill would help to end sexual assault and violence on campus by requiring schools to spell out their policies, conduct prevention activities, and ensure necessary assistance for victims.

Membership in the St. Lawrence County Branch is open to anyone who supports the mission of AAUW. AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research.

AAUW's commitment to educational equity is reflected in its public policy advocacy, community programs, leadership development, conventions and conferences, national partnerships, and international connections.

For more information about AAUW locally, contact President Becky Gerber at 268-9957 or gerberrl@potSDam.edu or Public Policy Chair Kathleen Stein at 386-3812 or kstein1@twcny.rr.com.