

## **Standing Up and Speaking Out**

In the modern world we live in, it's critical that we, as women, make our voices heard in this country. The core way that we do so is through our government, especially through the legislative branch where it's much easier for us to be represented.

If I were to be elected as a legislator, I'd want it to be to the House of Representatives. The House proposes the majority of laws, and since our state has a large population giving us more representation, we can lead other states in pushing necessary legislation. Though this comes with great responsibility, the power to bring about change allows for the opportunity to represent women with a stronger voice. With that, I would begin by focusing my energy on the issue of domestic violence.

Studies have shown that one of every four women has been a victim of abuse by a partner, in some shape or form. In the United States, every nine seconds another woman becomes a victim. The statistics skyrocket when it comes to LGBT women and women of color. It's outrageous how many women suffer from domestic abuse; something needs to happen so we can eliminate it. If I were elected to the House of Representatives, I would immediately begin to create and propose laws both to help support those who are victims and to bring harsher penalties for the abuser in the courts. Through providing services such as shelters, we would be able to assist women in the recovery process and hopefully be able to then move on with their lives. If we work to make sure abusers go to jail and receive the proper punishment for their crimes, then we would both assure the victims that the perpetrator would not harm anyone else and thus decrease the rates of violence by showing what will happen if someone commits any of these

actions. The majority of abusers receive a minimal punishment, if they even get any, and the concept of being able to get away with something as awful as abuse is terrifying. It shows that abuse is not taken seriously, which is a huge factor in why the majority of cases aren't reported, and women suffer in silence.

Legislators like Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a House member for Florida, has already been leading the charge against domestic violence. She is a strong supporter of multiple programs working to help end domestic violence and was a lead sponsor of the Violence Against Women Act, a law which sought to provide services to victims of domestic violence and help support them. She is also fighting hard to reauthorize the act, which had unfortunately been repealed recently. She's done much for women, especially those who are victims of domestic violence.

If I were a legislator, my first action would be to help lead the fight against domestic violence. As Ileana Ros-Lehtinen says, "no American deserves to live in fear, especially not in their own home, school, or neighborhood."