

# Letter to the Editor

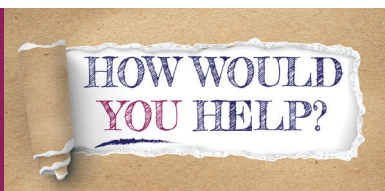
Readers' letters and comments are often the most-read sections of newspapers and news websites. They are great tools for building awareness about NCVRW. By writing a letter to the editor, you can link NCVRW or one of your organization's programs to a current local, state, or national issue by showing why readers should care about the rights and concerns of crime victims. Ideally, you would cite a reliable recent study, quote statistics about the crime or issue, or stress the need for more research about crimes that are often hidden or underreported.

Consider asking local law enforcement agencies or other organizations to partner with you, or encourage them to write their own letters to highlight the needs of crime victims and how the public can help. Letters that are endorsed by multiple community groups will receive more attention. When you submit your letter to the editor, include your contact information so the newspaper can reach you if it decides to print your letter. If the newspaper does not publish your letter, consider submitting it to a local organization that publishes a newsletter, post it on your website, or share it on social media.

In fact, consider using all of those outlets from the start. Tweak the language to make it the most relevant possible for each outlet where you seek publication.

## *Five Elements of an Attention-Grabbing Letter*

- Respond to an article or commentary recently published. Begin your letter by citing this article.
- Keep it brief—no more than 200-400 words (if you're submitting to a news outlet, be sure to check their word-limit parameters).
- Include a call to action.
- Use verified facts and reference the original sources.
- Include information on where people can learn more about the issue.



**Options, services  
and hope  
for crime survivors.**

## Sample Letter to the Editor (395 words )

October 12, 2024, will mark 40 years since President Reagan signed the landmark Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). This vital legislation elevated victims' rights to the highest level of American discourse and created a fund for crime victim services without using taxpayer money.

Created by VOCA, the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) helps organizations provide life-saving services to survivors.

[In fiscal years 2021 and 2022](#), nearly 8,000 organizations received grant money that assisted more than 30 million victims, including family members of homicide victims and survivors of robbery, assault, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual assault, domestic violence. [Insert any relevant local statistics/information about your organization's VOCA funding, if applicable.]

As of January 2024, the CVF had a balance of over \$1.2 billion. But the truth is that's just not enough. As recently as fiscal year 2017, the balance was roughly \$13 billion — and it has declined each year since. All the while, crime victimization remains an urgent concern for millions of Americans. In 2022 alone, there were nearly 20 million crime victimizations, according to the [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#).

In 2021, President Biden signed the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act in an historic effort to stabilize the CVF by requiring monetary penalties from federal deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements to go into the CVF instead of the General Treasury. The VOCA Fix has enabled a new funding stream to flow into the CVF — \$1.3 billion since enactment — and for that we should all be grateful. However, the VOCA Fix alone cannot bring about immediate stability. We must do more.

The declining CVF balance has consequences. When there's less funding available, services risk being cut. Such an outcome is, quite frankly, detrimental to the needs of survivors.

Why does this matter today? The theme of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, observed April 21-27, is "How would you help? Options, services, and hope for crime survivors." [Your organization] is joining many others across the U.S. to urge every American to be prepared to help survivors. That often means being able to tell victims where to find potentially life-saving services. As we approach the 40th anniversary of VOCA's signing, let's not take those services — and all the progress we've made — for granted.

If you or someone you know needs help, please contact [agency name and contact information].

[Author's name, title, and organization website, if allowed]

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