

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume

Madam Speaker, H. Res. 289 recognizes April as National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. The purpose of National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month is to increase the public's awareness and understanding about sexual violence in our society in order to encourage and support prevention of sexual assault.

The United States has the highest rate of any country publishing such statistics. A person is sexually assaulted in the United States every 2 1/2 minutes. The National Institute of Justice estimates that over 300,000 women and 90,000 men are forcibly raped each year in the United States; but according to the American Medical Association, these numbers are lower than national incidents of rape or attempted rape.

Approximately 17.7 million American women and 2.8 American men have been victims of rape or attempted rape at some point during their lives, according to the Bureau of Justice statistics. That equates to one in every six women and one in every 33 men. The National Center for Victims of Crime indicate that among women who have been raped, 39 percent have been raped more than once. Most victims are children or young adults. Some 44 percent of sexual assault victims are under the age of 18; 80 percent are

under the age of 30.

There are no significant differences in the rate of sexual assault among racial and ethnic groups, as sexual assault affects all populations roughly equally, though its impact is felt disproportionately by those least able to protect themselves. For example, persons with disabilities are estimated to be one and a half to five times more at risk of sexual assault than the general population. Between one-third and two-thirds of known sexual assault victims are age 15 or younger, according to a 2000 study by Population Reports, and women age 16 to 25 are three times more likely to be raped than those of higher age groups, according to the Bureau of Justice statistics. Also, the studies indicate that those in extreme poverty are twice as likely to be victimized as other women.

Most sexual assaults are not committed by strangers. Studies show that 70 percent of victims know their attackers, and this contributes to the underreporting of sexual assault. At the same time, studies show that 90 percent of those who knew their attackers did not report the crime. The study also found that most sexual assaults occur in the victim's home or that of a friend, relative, or acquaintance.

The consequences of sexual assault for victims are enormous and go well beyond physical effects. One-third of victims suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, according to the National Victims Center; one-third seriously consider suicide; 13 percent actually attempt suicide.

The roots of sexual assault violence are cultural. A 1991 study by the Jacqueline White and John Humphrey study found that 56

percent of high school girls and 76 percent of high school boys thought that forcible sex was acceptable under some circumstances. Some 51 percent of boys and 41 percent of girls thought that certain circumstances included when a boy "spent a lot of money on the girl." Thirty-one percent of boys and 32 percent of girls thought that forced sex was acceptable when women had had past sexual experiences. Eighty-seven percent of boys and 79 percent of girls thought it was acceptable when a man and woman were married. Sixty-five percent of boys, 47 percent of girls thought it acceptable if a boy and a girl had been dating for more than 6 months.

So, Madam Speaker, it is easy to see where there is need to focus much of our awareness and prevention efforts.

Sexual assault is a threat to the public health and public safety. It demands a coordinated response in the form of awareness, prevention, aggressive prosecution and service provision. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center, a project of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, estimates that there are 1,400 community crisis centers providing services to victims of sexual assault across the country. Such efforts have made a difference. Over the past decade, we have reduced the rate of rapes and attempted rapes by half. Yet at half, our highest level, we are still the highest rate of sexual assault in the world. So much more needs to be done to further address the scourge in our society.

So, Madam Speaker, as we observe National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, it is our hope that a month of intensified awareness efforts combined with a broad spectrum of sexual violence prevention work throughout the year will bring us

closer to ending and eradicating sexual assault in our society.
Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to support the resolution.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.