



Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs' Response to Koster's Remarks on Rape

Rape is a serious crime! Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs is angered and frustrated by recent comments made by a number of politicians that women should not have access to legal abortion, even in the case of rape.

Most recently, Washington State First Congressional District Republican candidate John Koster stated that the only exception to a ban on abortion should be when the woman's life is in danger. Koster states that incest is "so rare". He goes on to say, "But on the rape thing, it's like, how does putting more violence onto a woman's body and taking the life of an innocent child that's the consequence of this crime, how does that make it better?"

For over 30 years, advocates across Washington State have worked with victims of sexual violence. Incest and other forms of sexual violence are not rare at all. In fact, according to a 2001 survey, 33% of Washington State women have been sexually assaulted in their lifetime. Ninety-two percent of perpetrators of sexual assault were known to the victim and in the case of child sexual abuse, 33% of the perpetrators were fathers, stepfathers, or other relatives.ⁱ A 2010 national study confirms that incest remains a serious and prevalent problem, reporting that 37% of the perpetrators of childhood sexual abuse are biological parents, and an additional 23% are stepparents or parents' partners.ⁱⁱ

While some of the 32,000 American women who become pregnant by rape each year choose to give birth,ⁱⁱⁱ we cannot assume this is the right decision for all victims. All women should have the right to decide what happens with their bodies.

Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs stands with victims and survivors of sexual assault. You can find help in your community at www.wcsap.org.



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- ⁱ Berliner, L., Fine, D. & Moore, D. (2001). *Sexual Assault Experiences and Perceptions of Community Response to Sexual Assault: A Survey of Washington State Women*, 19-20.
- ⁱⁱ Sedlak, A.J., Mettenburg, J., Basena, M., Petta, I., McPherson, K., Greene, A., and Li, S. (2010). *Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4): Report to Congress*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Homes, M., Resnick, D., Kilpatrick, D., and Best, C. (1996). Rape Related Pregnancy: Estimates and descriptive characteristics form a national sample of women. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 175, (2), 320-325.