

# CRIME VICTIMS SHOULD NOT BE PAWNS IN BUDGET GAME

## QUICK STATS

- ✘ **CONFERENCE:** Spending
- ✘ **TEAM:** Congress
- **FUMBLE:** Using funding for crime victims as a budget gimmick
- **HOW TO RECOVER THE BALL:** Do not take money out of the CVF to pay for other areas of the federal budget

Congress created the Crime Victim Fund (CVF) in 1984 to receive deposits from criminal fines to fund grants to victims' service groups such as child advocacy centers, domestic violence shelters, and rape crisis centers. The CVF was based on the idea that the money collected from people who commit crimes should be used to assist victims.<sup>251</sup>

Instead of supporting crime victims, the CVF has been used to support out-of-control congressional spending habits through an obscure budgetary trick called changes in mandatory spending, or "CHIMPS." In an accounting gimmick that would make Enron proud, CVF CHIMPS allow for Congress to spend the *exact* same money more than ten times over.

It works like this. In 2000 Congress set a cap on funds that can be spent from CVF in a single year.<sup>252</sup> Any funds that have been deposited in CVF above that spending cap must remain in CVF to be used in future fiscal years. Since 2000 the receipts coming into CVF have outpaced spending that is subject to the annual cap. Thus, the CVF account has grown to more than \$13 billion.<sup>253</sup>

The catch is, due to poorly conceived budget scorekeeping methods, the difference between the cap on spending from the CVF in a year and the total funds remaining in the CVF is considered "savings" that can be used to offset spending elsewhere. The theory is that if Congress spends \$2 billion from a fund that has \$13 billion available, then the federal government has saved \$11 billion. In reality *not* spending the same \$11 billion year after year does not save money at all. As Senator Jeff Sessions (AL) appropriately described this process, "It would be like a family delaying a single \$500 home repair for ten years and counting it as \$5,000 in savings—\$500 for every year the repair didn't take place."<sup>254</sup>

Yet, with this fuzzy congressional math, Congress uses the same \$11 billion to justify more than \$100 billion in new spending over 10 years.

## RECOVERY

Congress should stop trying to trick the American people through dishonest budgetary practices. The CVF should be used to support victims of crime without being raided annually to cover spending somewhere else.

***For more information, please visit:***  
[Office for Victims of Crime: About OVC](#)