



INTERNATIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT HISTORY

The **International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA)**, S. 2279, was first introduced by the then Senator Biden in October of 2007. A companion version of the bill was later introduced in the House of Representatives and championed by Chairman Howard Berman, after its previous champion, Congressman Tom Lantos passed away. The bill was set to be marked up in the Senate in September 2008, however shortly before that hearing Senator Biden was tapped to be the Vice Presidential running mate of Barack Obama, and understandably the hearing and the legislation were put on hold.

During the **111th Congress**, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Senator John Kerry (D-MA) reintroduced the bill with Senators Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Susan Collins (R-ME) in the Senate, and Congressmen Bill Delahunt (D-MA) and Ted Poe (R-TX) championed it in the House. Hearings were held in both the House and Senate that included testimony from UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman, former Ambassador Don Steinberg and Ambassador Melanne Vermeer, and the bill was passed out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in December 2010. Unfortunately, Congress adjourned before further action could be taken.

In the **112th Congress** the *Coalition to End Violence Against Women Girls Globally* (Coalition) worked with Congressmen Ted Poe (R-TX) and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) to reintroduce the bill in the House. At the same time, The Coalition worked on actions the Obama Administration could take directly to implement core elements of the I-VAWA as well as minimal funding requests to begin development of the comprehensive strategy called for in the I-VAWA. In addition, the coalition continued to work to include components of the bill in other appropriate vehicles such as the National Defense Authorization Act. This led to inclusion of Report Language in the FY12 Omnibus that directed State and USAID to write a multi-sectoral strategy on gender-based violence - that was the core of what I-VAWA sought to achieve. The strategy laid out an inter-agency approach to identify, coordinate, integrate and leverage U.S. efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, as well as men and boys, around the world. In August 2012, the Obama Administration released the *U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence* through Executive Order.

At the start of the **113th Congress**, the Coalition and congressional champions sought to re-introduce I-VAWA once more with the hopes of codifying the Strategy that the Administration released. The Coalition was intentional about ensuring that the bill remained as bipartisan as possible and congressional champions waited to secure broad support before taking action. The legislation was used as an effective tool to continue to educate Members and the general public around the issue to demonstrate that GBV prevention and response is central to development and foreign policy. Under the leadership of Representative Gibson (R-NY) an amendment was adopted in the Joint Explanatory statement to accompany the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015:

“We encourage the DOD to support the continued implementation of the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally and to participate in the interagency working group. Gender-based violence impacts security and stability worldwide and as such, the United States must continue to lead the global effort to actively address it. We direct the Secretary of Defense or his designee(s) to brief

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the appropriate congressional committees on efforts by the DOD relating to its participation in the working group not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.”

In the **114th Congress**, the Coalition and congressional champions made another attempt at the re-introduction of IVAWA again with the main objective of codifying the GBV Strategy. On March 11, 2015 Senator Boxer along with co-sponsors, Senators Menendez, Collins, Kirk, and Shaheen re-introduced IVAWA in the Senate. The bill (S.713) was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. That re-introduction secured 27 co-sponsor by July of 2016. House champions, Representatives Schakowsky, Gibson, Engel, Hanna, Lowey, Brooks of Indiana, Wasserman Schultz, Heck of Nevada, Deutch, Lance, Tsongas, Meehan, Moore, Schock, Smith of Washington, Denham, Cicilline, and Collins of New York also re-introduced IVAWA (H.R.1340) in the House on March 6, 2015 and referred to House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

In April of 2016 Senator Boxer was successful at attaching and passing a segment of the IVAWA legislation (Codification of the *GBV Strategy*) as part of the [State Authorization bill](#) in the US Senate. However those provisions did not make it into the final version of the bill which was passed and made into law in December of 2016.

NOTABLE BILL CHANGES TO IVAWA OVER TIME:

- Removed the definition of “violence against women” because of the concern that it was too broad and that “psychological” violence was being included in the definition as a form of violence.
- Eliminated an authorization for appropriations.
- Removed the specific section on training of peacekeepers and addressing GBV in conflict settings to streamline the bill as it addresses all forms of GBV during all times. Doing this also took out mention of the United Nations.
- Streamlined reporting criteria for State and USAID.
- Strengthened monitoring and evaluation language.
- Updated the findings, adding segment on role of faith based groups and link of GBV and human trafficking, limiting mention of the words “health” and “women’s empowerment.”

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