

# United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

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## **Members of House and Senate Stand in Support of Landmark Legislation to Combat Violence against Women** *Strengthening National Security by Ending Violence Against Women and Girls*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) and Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA.), Chairwoman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy, and Global Women’s Issues, along with sponsors Senators Collins (R-ME) and Snowe (R-ME) and Representatives Bill Delahunt (D-MA), Ted Poe (R-TX), and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today introduced *The International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA)* in the House and Senate.

This landmark bipartisan legislation makes combating violence against women and girls a strategic imperative for the United States government. IVAWA creates new institutional authorities, responsibilities, and funding to fight the scourge of violence against women and girls around the globe.

“Societies where women are safe, where women are empowered to realize their aspirations and move their communities forward—are healthier and more stable societies,” said Senator Kerry. “This bill will protect women everywhere, and it turns out that championing these values is also an extremely effective and cost-efficient way to advance America’s foreign assistance goals and strengthen our national security.”

“I am pleased to join with Senators Kerry and Boxer and Representatives Poe and Schakowsky today in introducing legislation that makes ending violence against women an integral component of American foreign policy,” said Representative Delahunt. “During our congressional hearings this fall we found that the nations with the worst track record in preventing violence against women are also the most unstable and are breeding grounds for terrorism. It is crucial for our own national security that we be a global leader in addressing this

epidemic of gender violence and build a global network of groups who are equipped to stop the horrific abuse of women.”

Senator Boxer said, “Every day, too many women and girls across the globe endure horrific acts of violence. They are disfigured by acid, raped and beaten, or they are denied the opportunity to see a doctor. This important legislation gives the United States government the tools to make international violence against women and girls a top diplomatic priority.”

“As the international community strives to respond to conflicts and humanitarian crises, such as last month’s devastating earthquake in Haiti, it is absolutely vital that we pay careful attention to those populations most vulnerable to violence and abuse,” said Senator Snowe. “There is no question the federal government’s efforts to combat violence against women across the globe are hampered by a lack of strategic focus and integration with existing programs. With this bill, we will finally provide the State Department with the tools it needs to develop targeted, gender-based violence prevention and response activities in countries with significant levels of violence against women. There is no question women can and will drive social and economic progress in the developing world when they are afforded the same protections and opportunities.”

Senator Collins said, “I have long been concerned about the treatment of women and girls throughout the world, especially in places like Afghanistan. This legislation is an important step toward ending gender-related violence in the world, which is a disturbing and unacceptable practice.”

“Worldwide, one in three women will be the victim of abuse, physical, sexual, or psychological, because of her gender at some point in her lifetime,” said Representative Poe. “Violence doesn’t recognize borders. It is imperative to the fight to end violence against women that we take the lead, not only by example, but by educating and providing opportunities for other countries to end the violence around the world.”

“This is a crucial year for Afghanistan, and the country’s future success will depend, in large part, on its women. The women of Afghanistan, like women in all conflict zones, have borne the brunt of years of warfare; they will also form the underpinning of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. No woman should have to live her life in fear of attack. U.S. leadership will be critical if we are to effectively fight abuses against our sisters around the world. I am proud to support this important legislation, which will finally make halting violence against women and girls a U.S. foreign policy priority,” said Rep. Jan Schakowsky, Co-Chair of the Congressional Women’s Caucus.

Senators Brown, Burr, Cardin, Casey, Dodd, Durbin, Franken, Gillibrand, Johnson, Kaufman, Klobuchar, Landrieu, Lautenberg, Menendez, Mikulski, Murray, Schumer, Shaheen, Stabenow, Udall, and Whitehouse are co-sponsors of the legislation.

Attached to this release are documents which outline the legislation.

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