

House Passes Women, Peace and Security Act

[Foreign Affairs Committee](#)

Today, the House of Representatives passed the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 (S. 1141), bipartisan legislation requiring the U.S. to develop a comprehensive strategy to increase and strengthen women's participation in peace negotiations and conflict prevention.

On the House floor prior to the vote, Chairman Royce delivered the following remarks (as prepared for delivery):

"I rise in support of S. 1141, the Women, Peace, and Security Act. This is the Senate-companion to the bill, H.R. 2484, that the House passed earlier this session.

That bill was authored by Representatives Noem and Schakowsky, and I want to thank them and of course, Ranking Member Engel, for their leadership on this important issue. I also want to thank Senators Corker, Cardin, Shaheen, and Capito for working so well with us on this measure in the Senate.

I am happy to say that with House passage today, this measure heads to the President's desk.

As I noted when this bill passed the House in June, this moment is really a culmination of years of bipartisan work by Members of Congress, current and prior administration officials, and the many advocates who want to see better, more sustainable solutions to ending wars, combatting terrorism, and improving human rights around the world.

And what we are saying today is that women's participation is essential to confronting these fundamental challenges.

Last Congress, the Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing – part of its series on women in foreign affairs – where we heard powerful testimony about the importance of including women in peace processes around the world.

Now, it may seem obvious that women *should* have an opportunity to represent their communities as a matter of right. They make up half the population, and what negotiation or agreement can claim to represent women if their very participation is barred!

But our hearing also emphasized why women's participation in peace processes is important if we care about the likelihood of *success*.

Simply put, when women are at the negotiating table, peace is more likely. Compelling research shows that peace agreements are more likely to be reached – and to last – when women's groups are meaningfully involved.

Women peacemakers often press warring parties to move beyond mere power-sharing agreements, which benefit only a small percentage of fighters, to more comprehensive and longer-term accords, which benefit the civilian population as a whole. We have seen this play out from Colombia to Rwanda to Sri Lanka, where women's groups have pushed for practical solutions to de-escalate and resolve conflict.

In fact, later today I will be speaking with Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who I am proud to call a friend of many years. Of course, President Sirleaf and the women of Liberia represent what can be accomplished when women become involved in ending conflict. After many failed attempts by politicians, combatants, and the international community, it was the women of Liberia who forged an end to one of West Africa's longest-running and most brutal conflicts. We must learn from this history.

Efforts to "keep the peace" through policing and peacekeeping missions also benefit from women's participation, which leads to better crime reporting and higher levels of trust within the communities they serve.

And women are essential to confronting one of the greatest national security threats of our time: the spread of violent extremism. Women are truly on the front lines of this fight. They often possess unique insights into their families and communities, and are capable of gathering information that men cannot.

Yet their input is frequently overlooked. We must acknowledge women as partners in this fight.

And that is why the legislation before us today recognizes that it is in our national interest to promote women's participation in resolving violence and conflict.

This concept has been building support for some time. The Bush administration pressed hard for women's participation in peace negotiations and political processes in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

The Obama administration expanded on these programs to require a government-wide approach to women's inclusion in conflict resolution overseas.

And the current administration has said that the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues will continue to focus on these issues. I am eager to see an ambassador nominated to lead that Office.

The bipartisan legislation before us today builds on these efforts. It will continue to require a government-wide strategy to promote women's participation, along with specific goals and benchmarks and reporting to Congress in order to gauge progress.

It also requires that appropriate State, USAID, and Defense Department personnel receive training in how to facilitate women's participation in conflict resolution, security initiatives, and efforts to protect civilians from violence and exploitation.

I urge all Members to support this measure's passage, and I reserve the balance of my time."