

## **US House Passes Bipartisan Women, Peace, and Security Act**

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*By Allison Peters*

The US House of Representatives took a giant bipartisan step toward involving women in peace and security by passing legislation to make inclusive security a core component of US foreign policy.

The chamber today adopted the Women, Peace, and Security Act on a voice vote. The measure now moves to the Senate.

During a Foreign Affairs Committee hearing held earlier this year, members on both sides of the aisle committed to ensure progress through US leadership on the issue.

We commend the House for its action today to live up to that commitment.

For the last four years, Inclusive Security has worked with congressional champions to move the Women, Peace, and Security Act forward. The bill was updated and reintroduced in the House of Representatives earlier this year with strong bipartisan support by Congresswoman Kristi Noem (R-SD), Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA), and Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Eliot Engel (D-NY). We thank these co-sponsors, as well as all the members who helped advance the bill, including its other original supporters: Niki Tsongas (D-MA), Mike Honda (D-CA), and Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX).

### **What's It About?**

In a recent op-ed in *The Hill*, we explained why this bill is so critical. The systematic exclusion of women from decision-making related to peace and security hurts the US government's ability to address the many national security and foreign policy challenges that our country confronts. Decades of research proves it: from negotiating a peace agreement in Syria to combating the spread of ISIS, women's inclusion must be a core priority.

The Act would, among other things:

- Turn a national strategy into law, built upon the US National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security—launched in 2011;

- Require the president to provide reports to Congress that evaluate US diplomatic and foreign assistance vis-à-vis women's participation;
- Make an official statement that it is US policy to promote the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of conflict prevention, management, and resolution;
- Mandate training for US defense, diplomatic, and development personnel on the value of women's inclusion and strategies for achieving it; and
- Require the Secretary of State and USAID Administrator to establish guidelines for overseas personnel to ensure women's meaningful participation in consultations with key stakeholders on preventing and resolving conflict.

### **What's Next?**

After being approved today in the House of Representatives, the bill must next be considered in the Senate. Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Mark Kirk (R-IL), and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) have introduced similar legislation in that chamber.

As Inclusive Security's Director, Jacqueline O'Neill, testified to the House Foreign Affairs Committee in March: If adopted, this bill will be "a clear statement from Congress that women's inclusion is a foreign policy imperative".

### **How Can I Help?**

Reach out to your senators and urge them to support the Women, Peace, and Security Act by calling the Capitol switchboard at 202.224.3121. By taking this small step, you can help create and maintain peace and stability around the globe.