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Legislative Watch

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LEGISLATIVE WATCH

Legislative Watch reports on pending U.S. legislation relevant to human rights and humanitarian law. This list is not meant to be comprehensive.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Approves Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (D-DE)

On July 30, 2002, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, under the current chairman, Senator Joseph R. Biden, voted 12-7 to approve U.S. ratification of the United Nations' CEDAW, drafted in 1979 and entered into force on September 3, 1981. Although the United States signed CEDAW in 1980, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved it in 1994 by a vote of 13-5, efforts to ratify the treaty have been repeatedly stalled. With the Committee's approval, the full Senate will debate ratification of CEDAW, and will possibly vote on ratification in the fall. According to Senator Biden, "The treaty is a means to an end—a tool which strengthens the ability of the United States as well as women's advocates around the world to press nations to expand rights for women. This vote is a good first step toward improving women's rights worldwide and a victory for women everywhere."

Afghanistan Freedom Support Act of 2002, H.R. 3994

Major Sponsor: Rep. Henry J. Hyde (R-IL)

Status: Referred to Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on May 21, 2002.

Substance: This bill addresses economic, democratic, and military assistance for Afghanistan, as well as other foreign countries and international organizations providing support for Afghanistan. Principles governing the provision of economic and democratic development assistance include: reduction of terrorism, narcotics control, women's rights, self-sufficiency, and coordination of international donors. To achieve these goals, the bill authorizes the president to provide assistance in various areas, including humanitarian needs; repatriation and resettlement issues; counter-narcotics efforts, focusing specifically on opium; food and health conditions, emphasizing the rehabilitation of the agricultural sector; and infrastructure reconstruction. The bill urges the president to designate a coordinator within the Department of

State to facilitate these programs. With regard to military assistance, the bill calls for the requisite assistance, support, and training to develop a civilian-controlled and centrally governed army and a civilian police force, each operating with respect for human rights. Additionally, the bill calls for a multinational security force and makes similar assistance and training available to foreign countries or international organizations participating in military, peacekeeping, or policing operations in Afghanistan. The multinational security force's authority would terminate on December 31, 2004.

Proposal of an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States Relating to Marriage, H. J. Res. 93

Major Sponsor: Rep. Ronnie Shows (R-MS)

Status: Referred to House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on the Constitution on July 18, 2002.

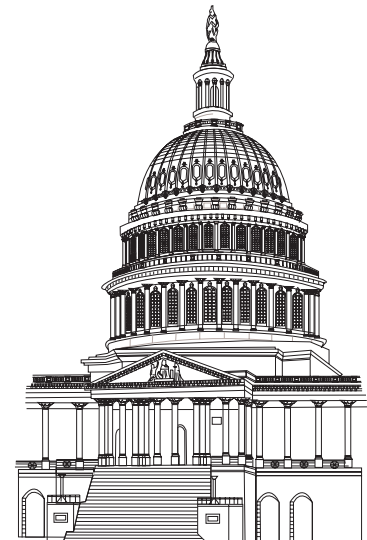
Substance: This legislation, also known as the Federal Marriage Amendment, proposes to narrow the definition of marriage, recognizing only those marriages between a man and a woman. Additionally, this legislation seeks to prohibit the conferral of legal marital status on unmarried couples or groups pursuant to state constitutions, state law, or federal law. The resolution was initially drafted by the Alliance for Marriage, which is composed of religious and political activists. If passed, the amendment would negate existing domestic partnership laws in eight states, including Vermont, the only state that legalizes civil unions.

Hunger to Harvest: Decade of Support for Sub-Saharan Africa Resolution, H. Con. Res. 102

Major Sponsor: Rep. James A. Leach (R-IA)

Status: Agreed to in the Senate by unanimous consent.

Substance: In calling on the United States to declare a decade of support for Sub-Saharan Africa, this legislation appeals to President Bush to produce five- and ten-year strategies to address hunger and poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. The bill also encourages the president to provide funding for bilateral and multilateral poverty-focused resources to address issues such as education, agriculture, economic develop-



ment, democracy building, micro-finance development, debt relief, and health, including HIV-AIDS prevention and treatment. To implement these strategies, the legislation encourages the president to work with other donor countries, NGOs, aid organizations, and Sub-Saharan African countries. The resolution makes an additional appeal to Congress for obtaining resources to implement such strategies, and requests that the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development report on the implementation of these strategies. 🌐

