

2001

Legislative Watch

Human Rights Brief

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Human Rights Brief. "Legislative Watch." Human Rights Brief 8, no. 2 (2001): 17.

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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.

Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act, H.R. 40

Major Sponsor: Rep. John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI)

Status: Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary on January 3, 2001.

Substance: This bill seeks to establish and operate a seven-member Commission to examine slavery in America between 1619 and 1865, which will make recommendations to Congress regarding appropriate remedies for the enslavement of Africans and their descendants. Three members of the Commission will be appointed by the president, three members will be appointed by the Speaker of the House, and one member will be appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate. The Commission will elect a chair and vice chair from among its members. This bill would authorize U.S.\$8 million for the Commission to examine the following issues: the treatment of African slaves during transport to and in the United States; the federal and state governments' roles in supporting the institution of slavery and opposing repatriation efforts for freed African slaves; discriminatory laws dating from the Civil War; and the continuing effect of slavery and discrimination on African-Americans living in the United States today. Additionally, the bill charges the Commission with determining whether the U.S. government should apologize on behalf of the people of the United States for the human rights abuses perpetrated against African slaves and their descendants. It also charges the Commission with determining whether any compensation to the descendants of African slaves is warranted. The Commission must submit a report to Congress not later than one year after the date of its first meeting and will be terminated 90 days after the date on which the Commission submits its report.

To delay any legal effect or implementation of a notice of rights and request for disposition form of the Immigration and Naturalization Service if an alien admits to being in the United States illegally, gives up the right to a hearing before departure, and requests to return to his country without a hearing, H.R. 22

Major Sponsor: Rep. Steve C. LaTourette (R-OH)

Status: Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary on January 3, 2001.

Substance: Under Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) procedure, a disposition form allows an alien to waive his or her right to a hearing in the process of allowing the INS to come to a disposition on the alien's case. This bill seeks to extend protection afforded to immigrants entering the United States by providing that any time an immigrant executes an INS notice of rights and request for disposition form the immigrant has one of two rights available—access to legal advice in his or her native tongue, or a 72-hour waiting period following certification of the form. The bill provides that the INS cannot deport/return an immigrant until one of these two rights is satisfied.

Violence Against Women Office Act, H.R. 28

Major Sponsor: Rep. Louise McIntosh Slaughter (D-NY)

Status: Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary on January 3, 2001.

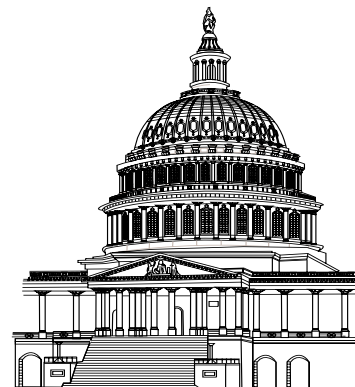
Substance: This bill seeks to establish the Violence Against Women office in the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). It further requires the president to appoint a director of the office, who will report, through the associate attorney general, to the United States attorney general. The director's duties and functions would include acting as special counsel to the attorney general on violence against women; liaising with the judicial branch about issues regarding violence against women; providing information to the president, Congress, and the general public, among others, on violence against women; and carrying out the DOJ's responsibilities under the 1994 Violence Against Women Act.

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Senate should ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, H. Res. 18

Major Sponsor: Rep. Lynn C. Woolsey (D-CA)

Status: Referred to the House Committee on International Relations on January 3, 2001.

Substance: This Resolution, co-sponsored by seven members of the House of Representatives, supports United States Sen-



ate ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Woman (CEDAW), which the United States signed on July 17, 1980. Ninety-eight countries have signed CEDAW and 166 countries have ratified or acceded to it. CEDAW calls for national action to end all forms of discrimination against women and is considered an important step toward the full realization of women's rights throughout the world. 🌐



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