

Senate Joint Resolution No. 24

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 53

Senate Joint Resolution No. 24—Relative to violence against women.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 6, 2010.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 24, Yee. Proposed federal International Violence Against Women Act.

This measure would urge the United States Congress to pass the International Violence Against Women Act, and establish the offices and policies therein.

WHEREAS, Violence against women and girls is rooted in multiple causes and takes many forms, including physical, sexual, and psychological. It affects all countries, social groups, ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic classes and is a global health, economic development, and human rights problem of epidemic proportions; and

WHEREAS, According to the World Health Organization, approximately one in three women in the world will experience violence in her lifetime, with rates of up to 70 percent in some countries, and one in five of the women in the world will be the victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime; and

WHEREAS, According to the 2006 United Nations Secretary General's report entitled Ending Violence Against Women, 102 member states have no specific laws on domestic violence; and

WHEREAS, Women and girls face many different types of gender-based violence, including forced or child marriage, so-called "honor killings," dowry-related murder, human trafficking, and female genital mutilation. The United Nations estimates that at least 5,000 so-called "honor killings" take place each year around the world and that more than 130 million girls and young women worldwide have been subjected to female genital mutilation; and

WHEREAS, The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief 2006 Report on Gender-Based Violence and HIV/AIDS reports that violence against women is a public health and development problem that significantly increases susceptibility to HIV/AIDS. A United Nations study on the global AIDS epidemic found that in sub-Saharan Africa, women who are 15 to 24 years of age can be infected at rates that are up to six times higher than men of the same age; and

WHEREAS, Recent studies in Africa indicate that many girls in primary and secondary school report sexual abuse or harassment by male teachers or classmates. Girls who experience sexual violence at school are also more

likely to experience unintended pregnancies or become infected with a sexually transmitted infection, including HIV/AIDS; and

WHEREAS, Rape and sexual assault are weapons of war used to torture, intimidate, and terrorize women and communities. Amnesty International reports that women have suffered from sexual violence during conflicts in Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, and most recently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where women have suffered from brutal and systematic sexual assaults; and

WHEREAS, Displaced, refugee, and stateless women and girls in humanitarian emergencies, conflict settings, and natural disasters face extreme violence and threats because of power inequities, including being forced to exchange sex for food and humanitarian supplies, and being at increased risk of rape, sexual exploitation, and abuse; and

WHEREAS, According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID): 70 percent of the 1.3 billion people worldwide living in poverty are women and children, two-thirds of the 876 million illiterate adults in the world are women, two-thirds of the 125 million schoolaged children who are not in school are girls, more than three-quarters of the 27 million refugees in the world are women and children, and 1,600 women die unnecessarily every day during pregnancy and childbirth; and

WHEREAS, In 2003, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women concluded that violence against women violates the basic human rights of women, results in “devastating consequences for women who experience it, traumatic impact on those who witness it, de-legitimization of states that fail to prevent it and the impoverishment of entire societies that tolerate it”; and

WHEREAS, Violence against women is an impediment to the health, opportunity, and development of women and society. According to an October 2006 study of the United Nations Secretary General entitled Ending Violence Against Women, “Violence against women impoverishes women, their families, communities and nations. It lowers economic production, drains resources from public services and employers, and reduces human capital formation”; and

WHEREAS, The World Bank recognizes that women’s health, education, and economic opportunities directly impact the development and well-being of their families and society. A 2001 World Bank Report, entitled Engendering Development, reports that greater gender equality leads to improved nutrition, lower child mortality, less government corruption, higher productivity, and reduced HIV infection rates; and

WHEREAS, Increased access to economic opportunities is crucial to the prevention of and response to domestic and sexual violence. Both microfinance-based interventions and increased asset control have been shown to reduce levels of intimate partner violence in addition to providing economic independence for survivors; and

WHEREAS, Campaigns to change social norms, including community organizing, media campaigns, and efforts to engage and educate men and

boys, have been shown to change attitudes that condone and tolerate violence against women and girls and reduce violence and abuse; and

WHEREAS, The International Violence Against Women Act would create within the United States Agency for International Development, the Office of Women's Global Development, and would establish the Office of Women's Global Initiatives and the Advisory Commission on International Violence Against Women within the U.S. Department of State, to develop a strategy and direct resources to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, The act would establish policies to prevent and respond to violence against women, including directing the preparation of a five-year international strategy to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls internationally, collecting data and conducting research about efforts to prevent and respond to violence, including information on violence against women and girls in human rights reports, enhancing the training of foreign military and police forces on violence against women and girls, and authorizing the appropriation of \$5,000,000 annually through fiscal year 2012 to support the United Nations Development Fund for Women Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature of the State of California hereby urges the United States Congress to pass the International Violence Against Women Act, and establish the offices and policies therein; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to each Senator and Representative from California in the United States Congress, and to the author for appropriate distribution.