

LEGISLATIVE WATCH

Legislative Watch is a new feature of *The Brief*. Its purpose is to report on pending legislation relevant to human rights and humanitarian law. This list is not meant to be comprehensive.

Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 1997, S. 869, H.R. 1858

Major Sponsors: Sen. James Jeffords (R-VT), Rep. Christopher Shays (R-CT)
Status: Referred to House Subcommittee on the Constitution on June 16, 1997. Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources held hearings on October 23, 1997. Likely to be reintroduced during 106th Congress.

Substance: This bill prohibits employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and establishes remedies for such discrimination.

Forced Abortion Condemnation Act, H.R. 2570

Major Sponsor: Rep. Tillie Fowler (R-FL)
Status: Passed in House on November 6, 1997, and received in Senate on June 18, 1998. Became part of a defense bill, but dropped in conference. Likely to be reintroduced during 106th Congress.

Substance: This bill prohibits the secretary of state from issuing any visa to, and the attorney general from admitting to the United States, any Chinese person who has been found to have been involved in the enforcement of Chinese government population control policies that have resulted in women being forced to undergo abortions, or men or women being forced to undergo sterilizations.

Hate Crimes Prevention Act, S. 1529, H.R. 3081

Major Sponsors: Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Rep. Charles Schumer (D-NY)
Status: Referred to House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth, and Families on December 10, 1997. House Subcommittee on Crime held hearings on July 22, 1998, and Senate Judiciary Committee held hearings on July 8, 1998. Likely to be reintroduced during the 106th Congress.

Substance: See article on page 13.

Human Rights Information Act, S. 1220, H.R. 2635

Major Sponsors: Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT), Rep. Tom Lantos (D-CA)
Status: House Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology forwarded an amended version of the bill to House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight on September 28, 1998. Senate defeated a narrower version, 50-43, on September 17, 1998. Likely to be reintroduced during the 106th Congress.

Substance: This bill expedites the declassification of documents relating to human rights abuses in Guatemala and Honduras and provides for the expedited release, upon request, of similar documents pertaining to other Latin American countries.

Human Rights in India Act, H.R. 1802

Major Sponsors: Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN), Rep. Gary Condit (D-CA)

Status: Referred to House Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on July 3, 1997, from House Committee on International Relations. Likely to be reintroduced during 106th Congress.

Substance: This bill prohibits development assistance for India unless the U.S. president ensures that India's government fulfills 11 tasks, including releasing prisoners of conscience, ensuring fair trials with legal representation, eliminating and redressing military torture practices, investigating torture of prisoners, locating political detainees who have "disappeared," allowing international human rights organizations access to all Indian states, and repealing certain detention laws.

Political Freedom in China Act, H.R. 2358

Major Sponsor: Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)

Status: Passed in House, Nov. 5, 1997. Received in Senate. Senate Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs hearings began on June 18, 1998.

Substance: This bill urges the secretary of state to request the immediate release of Ngodrup Phuntsog and other prisoners of conscience in Tibet and China, seek access for international humanitarian organizations to Drapchi prison and others like it, ensure against mistreatment of prisoners, and call on China to begin discussions with the Dalai Lama regarding Tibet's future.

School of the Americas, S. 980, H.R. 611

Major Sponsors: Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL), Rep. Joseph Kennedy (D-MA)

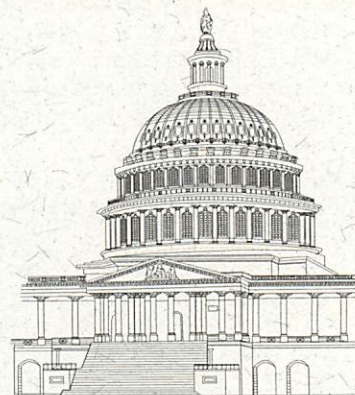
Status: A modified version, cutting school's funding, was defeated, 212-201, in House on September 17, 1998. Referred to Senate Armed Services Committee on June 27, 1997. Likely to be reintroduced during the 106th Congress.

Substance: This bill closes the U.S. Army School of the Americas, a military facility notorious for having trained members of Latin American security forces responsible for human rights abuses, and repeals the school's statutory authority.

Torture Victims Relief Act of 1998, H.R. 4309

Major Sponsor: Rep. Christopher Smith (R-NJ)

Status: On October 10, 1998, Congress passed a modified version of bill and cleared it for president's signature.



Substance: This bill authorizes financial assistance for treatment programs that aid victims of torture in the United States and abroad. The bill approves the release of US\$6 million to the UN to deal with this issue and provides specialized training for foreign service officers to ensure that proper consideration is given to torture victims who apply for refugee status.

Turkish Human Rights Act, H.R. 1361

Major Sponsors: Rep. Robert Andrews (D-NJ), Rep. John Porter (R-IL)

Status: Referred to House Committee on International Relations on April 17, 1997. Uncertain if bill will be reintroduced during 106th Congress.

Substance: The bill prohibits economic assistance to the Government of Turkey unless the secretary of state determines that there was progress in permitting international human rights organizations to monitor human rights in Turkey, "ceasing to deny human rights to the Kurdish people," demilitarization of and democratic development in Cyprus, "ceasing to blockade U.S. and international assistance to Armenia," and ceasing "restrictions on religious freedom."

Worldwide Trafficking of Persons, S. Con. Res. 82

Major Sponsors: Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-MN), Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY)

Status: No change since placed on Senate Legislative Calendar on August 25, 1998. Likely to be reintroduced during the 106th Congress.

Substance: This bill urges the Department of Justice to report to Congress on efforts to identify instances of trafficking persons into the United States, urges that victims be offered incentives to testify, and calls upon the U.S. secretary of state to train consular officers on the risks of trafficking and victims' rights, and to disperse to visa seekers materials describing the risks of trafficking. ☉