

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 229

To empower women in Afghanistan, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 13, 2009

Mrs. BOXER introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred
to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To empower women in Afghanistan, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Afghan Women Em-
5 powerment Act of 2009”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) Under the oppressive rule of the Taliban,
9 the women of Afghanistan were denied the most
10 basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, in-
11 cluding the rights to life, work, education, health
12 care, movement, expression, and religion.

1 (2) Many women who attempted to assert their
2 rights under the Taliban regime were subjected to
3 beatings and imprisonments, and many suffer from
4 the long-term consequences of such oppression.

5 (3) Women in Afghanistan have one of the
6 highest maternal mortality rates in the world, with
7 an estimated one death for every 56 live births.

8 (4) Despite efforts by the United States Gov-
9 ernment and the international community to improve
10 the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan, many
11 women and girls continue to lack access to basic
12 services, including health care and education. Ap-
13 proximately 79 percent of Afghan women are illit-
14 erate.

15 (5) Today, women and girls in Afghanistan still
16 face oppression resulting from violence and intimidat-
17 ion by the Taliban, other religious extremists, and
18 militia groups within their communities. School girls
19 and their teachers continue to face brutal attacks in
20 an effort to prevent them from regaining their rights
21 and freedoms.

22 (6) According to the United States Commission
23 on International Religious Freedom, the absence of
24 clear protections for the right to freedom of religion
25 or belief for individual Afghan citizens has resulted

1 in a growing number of criminal prosecutions and
2 other official actions against individuals, including
3 women, for exercising their basic rights.

4 (7) The strengthening of institutions and other
5 actors, such as nongovernmental organizations, in
6 Afghanistan is essential to building a civil society
7 and holding the Government of Afghanistan to its
8 international obligations under the International
9 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other
10 international instruments to protect and ensure the
11 rights of women.

12 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AF-**
13 **GHANISTAN.**

14 It is the sense of Congress that—

15 (1) the protection of the rights of women and
16 girls in Afghanistan and their full participation in
17 the reestablishment of democracy is essential to the
18 reconstruction of a stable and democratic Afghani-
19 stan, and to achieve such a reconstruction, the
20 United States Government must continue to commit
21 resources to advance the rights of women through-
22 out Afghanistan;

23 (2) the United States Government should pro-
24 vide strong support for the Afghan Ministry of
25 Women's Affairs and the Afghan Independent

1 Human Rights Commission, both of which were cre-
2 ated by the Agreement on Provisional Agreements in
3 Afghanistan Pending the Establishment of Perma-
4 nent Governing Institutions, done in Bonn, Decem-
5 ber 5, 2001 (commonly known as the “Bonn Agree-
6 ment”) to remedy past violations of women’s rights
7 and human rights and to establish institutions and
8 programs to ensure policies that advance such
9 rights;

10 (3) the United States Government should make
11 it a priority to provide assistance to Afghan-led non-
12 governmental organizations, particularly Afghan
13 women-led nonprofit organizations; and

14 (4) grants and assistance to Afghanistan should
15 be conditioned upon the Government of Afghanistan
16 adhering to international standards for women’s
17 rights and human rights, including the internation-
18 ally recognized right to freedom of thought, con-
19 science, and religion or belief.

20 **SEC. 4. ASSISTANCE TO WOMEN AND GIRLS.**

21 Section 103(a)(7) of the Afghan Freedom Support
22 Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 7513(a)(7)) is amended—

23 (1) in subparagraph (A), by striking clauses (i)
24 through (xii) and inserting the following:

1 “(i) to provide equipment, medical
2 supplies, and other assistance to health
3 care facilities for the purpose of reducing
4 maternal and infant mortality and mor-
5 bidity;

6 “(ii) to establish and expand pro-
7 grams to provide services to women and
8 girls suffering from mental health prob-
9 lems, such as depression, anxiety, and
10 posttraumatic stress disorder;

11 “(iii) to expand immunization pro-
12 grams for women and children;

13 “(iv) to protect and provide services to
14 vulnerable populations, including widows,
15 orphans, and women heads of households;

16 “(v) to establish primary and sec-
17 ondary schools for girls that include math-
18 ematics, science, and languages in their
19 primary curriculum;

20 “(vi) to expand technical and voca-
21 tional training programs to enable women
22 to support themselves and their families;

23 “(vii) to maintain and expand adult
24 literacy programs, including economic lit-

eracy programs that promote the well-being of women and their families;

“(viii) to provide special educational opportunities for girls whose schooling was ended by the Taliban and who now face obstacles to participating in the normal education system, such as girls who are now married and girls who are older than the normal age for their classes;

“(ix) to disseminate information throughout Afghanistan on the rights of women and on international standards for human rights;

“(x) to provide information and assistance to enable women to exercise property, inheritance, and voting rights, and to ensure equal access to the judicial system;

“(xi) to provide legal assistance to women who have suffered violations of their rights;

“(xii) to increase political and civil participation of women in all levels of society, including the criminal justice system;

“(xiii) to provide information and training related to women’s rights and

1 human rights to military, police, judicial,
2 and legal personnel;

3 “(xiv) to provide assistance to the
4 Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the Af-
5 ghan Independent Human Rights Commis-
6 sion for programs to advance the status of
7 women; and

8 “(xv) to develop and implement pro-
9 grams to protect women and girls against
10 sexual and physical abuse, abduction, traf-
11 ficking, exploitation, and sex discrimina-
12 tion, including providing emergency shel-
13 ters for women and girls who face danger
14 from violence.”; and

15 (2) by restating subparagraph (B) to read as
16 follows:

17 “(B) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—For each
18 of the fiscal years 2010 through 2012—

19 “(i) \$5,000,000 is authorized to be
20 appropriated to the President to be made
21 available to the Afghan Ministry of Wom-
22 en’s Affairs for the administration and
23 conduct of its programs;

24 “(ii) \$10,000,000 is authorized to be
25 appropriated to the President to be made

1 available to the Afghan Independent
2 Human Rights Commission for the admin-
3 istration and conduct of its programs; and

4 “(iii) \$30,000,000 is authorized to be
5 appropriated to the President for grants to
6 Afghan women-led nonprofit organizations
7 to support activities including the construc-
8 tion, establishment, and operation of
9 schools for married girls and girls’ orphan-
10 ages, vocational training and human rights
11 education for women and girls, health care
12 clinics for women and children, programs
13 to strengthen Afghan women-led organiza-
14 tions and women’s leadership, and to pro-
15 vide monthly financial assistance to wid-
16 ows, orphans, and women heads of house-
17 holds.”.

18 **SEC. 5. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON ASSISTANCE.**

19 It is the sense of Congress that, in providing assist-
20 ance under section 103(a)(7) of the Afghan Freedom Sup-
21 port Act (22 U.S.C. 7513(a)(7)), as amended by section
22 4, the President should—

23 (1) condition the provision of such assistance on
24 the recipient adhering to international standards for
25 women’s rights and human rights; and

- 1 (2) ensure that Afghan women-led nongovern-
- 2 mental organizations throughout Afghanistan receive
- 3 grants without ethnic, religious, or any other dis-
- 4 crimination.

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