

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 542

To promote international exchanges on best election practices, to cultivate more secure democratic institutions around the world, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 2 (legislative day, MARCH 1), 2021

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. SULLIVAN) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To promote international exchanges on best election practices, to cultivate more secure democratic institutions around the world, 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 “Global Electoral Ex-
5 change Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

7 It is the sense of Congress that—

8 (1) recent elections globally have illustrated the
9 urgent need for the promotion and exchange of
10 international best election practices, particularly in

1 the areas of cybersecurity, results transmission,
2 transparency of electoral data, election dispute reso-
3 lution, and the elimination of discriminatory reg-
4 istration practices and other electoral irregularities;

5 (2) the advancement of democracy worldwide
6 promotes United States interests, as stable democ-
7 racies provide new market opportunities, improve
8 global health outcomes, and promote economic free-
9 dom and regional security;

10 (3) credible elections are the cornerstone of a
11 healthy democracy and enable all persons to exercise
12 their basic human right to have a say in how they
13 are governed;

14 (4) inclusive elections strengthen the credibility
15 and stability of democracies more broadly;

16 (5) at the heart of a strong election cycle is the
17 professionalism of the election management body
18 and an empowered civil society;

19 (6) the development of local expertise via peer-
20 to-peer learning and exchanges promotes the inde-
21 pendence of such bodies from internal and external
22 influence; and

23 (7) supporting the efforts of peoples in democ-
24 ratizing societies to build more representative gov-

1 ernments in their respective countries is in the na-
2 tional interest of the United States.

3 **SEC. 3. GLOBAL ELECTORAL EXCHANGE.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State is author-
5 ized to establish and administer a Global Electoral Ex-
6 change Program (referred to in this section as the “Pro-
7 gram”) to promote the utilization of sound election admin-
8 istration practices around the world.

9 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the Program shall in-
10 clude the promotion and exchange of international best
11 election practices, including in the areas of—

- 12 (1) cybersecurity;
- 13 (2) the protection of election systems against
14 influence campaigns;
- 15 (3) results transmission;
- 16 (4) transparency of electoral data;
- 17 (5) election dispute resolution;
- 18 (6) the elimination of discriminatory registra-
19 tion practices and electoral irregularities;
- 20 (7) inclusive and equitable promotion of can-
21 didate participation;
- 22 (8) equitable access to polling places, voter edu-
23 cation information, and voting mechanisms (includ-
24 ing by persons with disabilities); and

1 (9) other sound election administration prac-
2 tices.

3 (c) EXCHANGE OF ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State, in
5 consultation, as appropriate, with the United States
6 Agency for International Development, may award
7 grants to any United States-based organization
8 that—

9 (A) is described in section 501(c)(3) of the
10 Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt
11 from tax under section 501(a) of such Code;

12 (B) has experience in, and a primary focus
13 on, foreign comparative election systems or sub-
14 ject matter expertise in the administration or
15 integrity of such systems; and

16 (C) submits an application in such form,
17 and satisfying such requirements, as the Sec-
18 retary may require.

19 (2) TYPES OF GRANTS.—An organization de-
20 scribed in paragraph (1) may receive a grant under
21 this subsection to design and implement programs
22 that—

23 (A) bring to the United States election ad-
24 ministrators and officials, including government
25 officials, poll workers, civil society representa-

1 tives, members of the judiciary, and others who
2 participate in the organization and administra-
3 tion of public elections in a foreign country that
4 faces challenges to its electoral process to study
5 election procedures in the United States for
6 educational purposes; or

7 (B) take election administrators and offi-
8 cials of the United States or of another country,
9 including government officials, poll workers,
10 civil society representatives, members of the ju-
11 diciary, and others who participate in the orga-
12 nization and administration of public elections
13 to another country to study and discuss election
14 procedures in such country for educational pur-
15 poses.

16 (3) LIMITS ON ACTIVITIES.—Activities adminis-
17 tered under the Program may not—

18 (A) include observation of an election for
19 the purposes of assessing the validity or legit-
20 imacy of that election;

21 (B) facilitate any advocacy for a certain
22 electoral result by a grantee when participating
23 in the Program; or

1 (C) be carried out without proper consulta-
2 tion with State and local authorities in the
3 United States that administer elections.

4 (4) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
5 Congress that the Secretary of State should estab-
6 lish and maintain a network of Global Electoral Ex-
7 change Program alumni, to promote communication
8 and further exchange of information regarding
9 sound election administration practices among cur-
10 rent and former Program participants.

11 (5) LIMITATION.—A recipient of a grant under
12 the Program may only use such grant for the pur-
13 pose for which such grant was awarded, unless oth-
14 erwise authorized by the Secretary of State.

15 (6) NONDUPLICATIVE.—Grants made under
16 this subsection may not be duplicative of any other
17 grants made under any other provision of law for
18 similar or related purposes.

19 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
20 authorized to be appropriated \$5,000,000 for each of the
21 fiscal years 2022 through 2026 to carry out this section.

22 **SEC. 4. CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT.**

23 Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment
24 of this Act and annually thereafter for the following 2
25 years, the Secretary of State shall provide a briefing to

1 the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and
2 the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Rep-
3 resentatives regarding the status of any activities carried
4 out under section 3 during the preceding year, which shall
5 include—

6 (1) a summary of all exchanges conducted
7 under the Global Electoral Exchange Program, in-
8 cluding information regarding grantees, participants,
9 and the locations where program activities were held;

10 (2) a description of the criteria used to select
11 grantees under the Global Electoral Exchange Pro-
12 gram; and

13 (3) recommendations for the improvement of
14 the Global Electoral Exchange Program in further-
15 ance of the purpose specified in section 3(b).

○