

I thank the chairman, as always, for his cooperation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. ENGEL.

I think, by moving quickly here, we can send this bill to the President's desk.

I am proud to note, I will add, that we recognize this special relationship in the House with the British American Parliamentary Group, which was formed shortly after World War II, and each year Members of Congress and Members of Parliament convene to discuss our partnership.

Last year, Congress dedicated a bust of Winston Churchill that is prominently displayed in this Capitol. We just had an unveiling today of the bust for Vaclav Havel, and it will stand next to that of Winston Churchill.

Mr. Speaker, the United Kingdom remains our closest ally and most important security partner, and the Mutual Defense Agreement is a key element of our unmatched special relationship, as Churchill used to call it.

By renewing this agreement, Congress will ensure the uninterrupted continuation of our close nuclear cooperation with the U.K. and reinforce our joint ability to provide strategic security. So I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5681.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GIRLS COUNT ACT OF 2014

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3398) to authorize the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development to provide assistance to support the rights of women and girls in developing countries, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3398

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Girls Count Act of 2014".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) According to the United States Census Bureau's 2013 international figures, 1 person in 12—or close to 900,000,000 people—is a girl or young woman age 10 through 24.

(2) The data also asserts that young people are the fastest growing segment of the population in developing countries.

(3) Even though most countries do have birth registration laws, nearly one-third of all children under the age of 5 worldwide have never had their births registered. Moreover, an estimated 45 percent of children under the age of 5 worldwide (about 290 million children) do not possess a birth certificate.

(4) A nationally recognized proof of birth is the key to determining a child's citizenship, nationality, place of birth, parentage and age, without which a passport, drivers license, or national identification card are impossible to obtain. Those who lack such documentation are often prevented from officially participating in and benefitting from the formal economic, legal, and political sectors in their countries.

(5) The lack of birth registration among girls worldwide is particularly concerning as it exacerbates their disproportionate vulnerability to trafficking, child marriage, and lack of access to health and education services.

(6) A lack of birth registration among women and girls can also aggravate what in many places amounts to an already reduced ability to seek employment, participate in civil society or purchase or inherit land and other assets.

(7) Girls undertake much of the domestic labor needed for poor families to survive: carrying water, harvesting crops, tending livestock, caring for younger children, and doing chores.

(8) Accurate assessments of access to education, poverty levels, and overall census activities are hampered by the lack of official information on women and girls. Without this rudimentary information, assessments of foreign assistance and domestic social welfare programs cannot be accurately gauged.

(9) To ensure that women and girls are fully integrated into United States foreign assistance policies and programs, that the specific needs of girls are, to the maximum extent possible, addressed in the design, implementation, and evaluation of development assistance programs, and that women and girls have the power to affect the decisions that affect their lives, all girls should be counted and have access to birth certificates and other official documentation.

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States to—

(1) encourage countries to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enact laws that ensure girls and boys of all ages are full participants in society, including requiring birth certifications and some type of national identity card to ensure that all citizens, including girls, are counted;

(2) enhance training and capacity-building to developing countries, local nongovernmental organizations, and other civil society organizations to effectively address the needs of birth registries in countries where girls are undercounted;

(3) include organizations representing children and families in the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs under this Act; and

(4) mainstream into the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs at all levels an understanding of the distinctive impact that such policies and programs may have on girls.

SEC. 4. UNITED STATES ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT COUNTING OF GIRLS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD.

(a) AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary and the Administrator are authorized to—

(1) support programs that will contribute to improved and sustainable Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (CRVS) with a focus on birth registration as the first

and most important life event to be registered;

(2) promote programs that build the capacity of developing countries' national and local legal and policy frameworks to prevent discrimination against girls;

(3) support programs to help increase property rights, social security, and home ownership, land tenure security, and inheritance rights for women; and

(4) assist key ministries in the governments of developing countries, including health, interior, youth, and education ministries, to ensure that girls from poor households obtain equitable access to social programs.

(b) COORDINATION WITH MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS.—The Secretary shall coordinate with the World Bank, relevant United Nations agencies and programs, and other relevant organizations to urge and work with countries to enact, implement, and enforce laws that specifically collect data on girls and establish registration and identification laws to ensure girls are active participants in the social, economic, legal and political sectors of society in their countries.

(c) COORDINATION WITH PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS.—The Secretary and the Administrator should work with United States, international, and local private sector and civil society organizations to advocate for the registration and documentation of all girls and boys in developing countries to prevent exploitation, violence, and other abuses.

SEC. 5. REPORT.

The Secretary and the Administrator shall include in relevant evaluations and reports to Congress the following information:

(1) To the extent practicable, United States foreign assistance and development assistance beneficiaries by age, gender, marital status, location, and school enrollment status.

(2) A description of how United States foreign assistance and development assistance benefits girls.

(3) Specific information on programs that address the particular needs of girls.

SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term "Administrator" means the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

(2) FOREIGN ASSISTANCE.—The term "foreign assistance" has the meaning given the term in section 634(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2394(b)).

(3) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of State.

SEC. 7. SUNSET.

This Act shall expire on the date that is 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and also to include any extraneous material for the RECORD on the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this measure. It is called the Girls Count Act, and I do want to thank Mr. CHABOT of Ohio for his work on this important piece of legislation.

Now, what this does is it aims to increase birth registration rates in developing countries. And usually the births which are not being registered are infant females.

Nearly one-third of all children around the world have never had their births registered by their country's civil registries. Almost hard for us to recognize here—one-third.

A child whose birth is not recorded has no birth certificate to prove her age or his age or parentage or citizenship, making these children especially vulnerable to violations of their basic rights.

The lack of a birth certificate usually prevents individuals from acquiring essential pieces of identification that you are going to need in life—like a driver's license, like a passport—and can also impede any financial transaction you are going to make—taking out a loan, taking out a mortgage. Basically, these girls, tragically, don't count.

For girls in particular, this lack of documentation can undercut existing legal protections against girls being trafficked or made child brides. And as they grow up, girls without an official identity face high barriers to work, high barriers to education or political participation, and all of this in places where we need women and girls to be actively shaping their country's future, to improve prospects for development, to oppose extremism in their communities.

That is why I am pleased that the House is acting on H.R. 3398, because this bill supports efforts to increase birth registration by encouraging the State Department and USAID to work with countries on improving their civil registries.

The bill promotes the development of laws and policies to prevent discrimination against girls and improve property and inheritance rights for women. And lastly, the legislation requires the State Department and USAID to provide more relevant breakdowns of foreign assistance whenever possible so that we can be sure women and girls are from benefiting from our efforts.

So this bill complements other work that the House has done this Congress, particularly our efforts to combat child trafficking and to promote safe international adoptions. Ensuring that every boy and girl is counted can prevent children from being trafficked or prevent them from being exploited or denied a loving home.

I am proud of the House's work thus far to address this critical issue. I believe that this bill in particular is another step in advancing this agenda, and that is why I would just like to

recognize Mr. CHABOT for all of the work he put into it and, as well, of course, to recognize Mr. ENGEL's contribution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume, and I rise in strong support of H.R. 3398, the Girls Count Act of 2014.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank Representative CHABOT and Representative MCCOLLUM for authoring this important legislation. It is very good legislation, it is very important legislation, and I am proud to be a part of it.

Around the world, nearly 230 million children under the age of 5 have never had their birth registered or been issued a birth certificate. Most of these unregistered children are girls, and all of them face serious vulnerabilities.

The lack of birth registration makes it much harder to get official documentation and, as a result, these children often become targets for child labor, abuse, human and sex trafficking, child marriage, recruitment into militant groups, and other forms of exploitation.

Unregistered children are often prevented from access to health care, including necessary child immunizations, and from enrolling in school. Down the line, many of these children will be unable to inherit land or money, start a business, or even open a bank account.

This sort of marginalization often hits women the hardest. Unregistered women are more likely to be confined to their homes and invisible to the outside world. Lack of registration limits their choices and opportunities and impedes the long-term development of their communities.

H.R. 3398 will enhance efforts to get more children registered. It reaffirms our strong support for programs aimed at addressing the undercounting of girls in the developing world. It encourages countries to support programs that expand the rights of women, especially property ownership and Social Security rights.

The legislation authorizes the Secretary of State and the Administrator of USAID to support important civil registration and vital statistics programs focusing on birth registration, and allows them to work with local government ministries to ensure equal access to these programs. This complements the work of organizations around the world that are engaged in the important work of protecting vulnerable children and puts pressure on other governments to act.

While improving birth registration systems helps the most vulnerable populations, it has positive ripple effects across a whole society. Governments with better records can provide better services, tailor more effective policies, and bring more people into full participation in their economies. This basic practice can help make entire countries stronger.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation. I, once again, thank Chairman ROYCE for his cooperation and bipartisanship.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, and the author of this particular bill.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman ROYCE for his leadership on this important issue, and I also want to thank my friends and colleagues, Mr. ENGEL and Ms. MCCOLLUM, for their leadership and their support as well.

Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that we are living in challenging times. The international community is having to confront new evils it seems like every day. It is critical that we confront these evils with determination and resolve and intelligence. This bill, the one before us today, really actually does this.

With this bill, Congress has the opportunity to address an injustice that is holding girls back from fully participating in society but, worse, exposing them to the particularly horrific evils of human trafficking.

There are 230 million children around the globe under the age of 5 who have never been recognized as being born. Their births were simply never recorded.

In eastern and southern Africa, for example, only 38 percent of children are registered by their fifth birthday. So think of that; nearly two-thirds of the children born in those regions in Africa are not registered. There is no recording of their birth. They, in essence, don't exist to the government.

These children, a majority of whom are girls, become invisible members of society and miss a critical first step in securing their fundamental human rights. Being recognized by your government is necessary, for example, for determining identity and citizenship and age and obtaining access to education and health care and many other things.

When a girl is not counted at birth, it is difficult, if not impossible, for her to own land or start her own business or vote, and she is at risk of being confined to home and, oftentimes, left unpaid.

Lack of a birth certificate keeps girls from fully participating in society. It increases the risk of child marriage, forced labor, recruitment into militant groups, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation.

The Girls Count Act would help put an end to these horrors. The bill directs the Department of State and USAID to work with our international partners to support the issuance of birth certificates in developing countries. The bill will ensure that the most important step in a new citizen's life, the registration and recognition of their very birth by their government, actually occurs.

Mr. Speaker, the lack of a birth certificate denies children their fundamental human rights that we as Americans oftentimes take for granted. This bill would make it U.S. policy to encourage the registration of all children worldwide and make sure that girls do truly count.

With that, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I want to once again thank Mr. ROYCE and Mr. ENGEL for their support and leadership in this.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to again thank the chairman and thank Mr. CHABOT.

Getting children registered at birth helps to get them off to a good start. This bill encourages governments to enact laws and policies that give all children, including girls, a chance to be full participants in society. So I strongly support this bill and urge my colleagues to do so as well.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, before I close, I would like to also mention the contributions of Congresswoman BETTY MCCOLLUM and Congressman CHRIS SMITH.

CHRIS SMITH is the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations. He is also an original cosponsor of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I want to thank the distinguished chairman for yielding and for his leadership in helping to bring this legislation to the floor, and especially Chairman CHABOT for his Girls Count Act of 2013. I am happy and thankful to be an original cosponsor and to urge the House to vote for it.

Mr. Speaker, in many parts of the world, girls are discriminated against simply for being female. Indeed, this blatant disregard for the value of the girl child often begins in the womb, especially in countries such as China and India, where we see the horrific practice of sex-selection abortion. This cruel practice, in turn, has led to a gender imbalance that has fed other crimes against women, especially sex trafficking, which has risen exponentially in the People's Republic of China because of the missing daughters, because of this discrimination against the girl child in utero.

Let me point out that, in her book, "Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys over Girls, and the Consequences of a World Full of Men," Mara Hvistendahl traces the history of sex selection to population control. Again, we don't count the girl as being of meaning. Of course, this is talking about a physical count, so we have a record of these young ladies, of these young girls, but

there are consequences, again, that continue throughout the life or the lack of because she is destroyed early on.

Hvistendahl writes—and I will only mention this briefly—that there are over 160 million missing girls in Asia—in China, mostly, and in India. It is a direct result of sex-selection abortion, and that discrimination of the girl child has profound implications for the region and for the world and, of course, for all of those girls who have lost their lives.

Again, I want to thank Mr. CHABOT for this important legislation and BETTY MCCOLLUM. This is a very important step forward in making sure we know where the girls are after being counted so they can fully participate in society.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I will close now, and I will urge my colleagues to vote for this important bill.

I thank the chairman, Mr. CHABOT, Mr. SMITH, and Ms. MCCOLLUM.

This is a bipartisan, important piece of legislation, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support it.

I yield back the balance of my time. Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

The point I would make in closing is that, in the wake of the horrors we have seen perpetrated by ISIS against women and Boko Haram against schoolgirls—kidnapping and enslaving them and robbing them of their freedom—we had one of these girls testify before our committee. She had narrowly escaped Boko Haram but lost her mother and her father.

I know so many of us are deeply concerned about the plight of women and girls around the world, and this bill recognizes the suffering and aims to empower those who have been cast into the shadows of their society. Birth registration is one of the first steps in the fight to preserve an individual's basic rights under the law. It is also a critical means to ensuring the full participation of women and of girls in communities and schools. Let's help girls count. That is what this does.

Again, I want to thank Mr. CHABOT and BETTY MCCOLLUM and Mr. CHRIS SMITH of New Jersey, as well, for their leadership on this measure, which I encourage all Members to support.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3398, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONDEMNING IRAN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the reso-

lution (H. Res. 754) condemning the Government of Iran for its gross human rights violations.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 754

Whereas Iran is a member of the United Nations and a signatory to both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, among other international human rights treaties, without reservation;

Whereas in violation of these and other international obligations, officials of the Government of Iran continue to perpetrate gross violations of the fundamental human rights of the Iranian people;

Whereas Iranian women are increasingly subject to heinous acid attacks, either condoned by, or sponsored by, the Government of Iran, through the Basij and other vigilante groups;

Whereas the Parliament of Iran recently enacted a law providing legal protection to private citizens to enforce a strict Islamic dress code and other behavior prescribed under Sharia law, emboldening the Basij and other vigilante groups;

Whereas the Government of Iran "manipulates the electoral process", according to the United States Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013, "severely limit[ing] citizens' right to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections";

Whereas following voting irregularities that resulted in the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Government of Iran brutally suppressed peaceful political dissent from wide segments of civil society during the Green Revolution in 2009 in a cynical attempt to retain its undemocratic grip on power;

Whereas the Government of Iran has kept the principal leaders of the Green Revolution, Mir Hussein Moussavi and Mehdi Karroubi, under house arrest since February 2011;

Whereas the United States Department of State consistently finds that Iranian authorities have "limited freedom of association through threats, intimidation, the imposition of arbitrary requirements on organizations, and the arrests of group leaders and members";

Whereas the United States Department of State's Virtual Embassy Tehran website highlights human rights violations and abuses in Iran on a weekly basis;

Whereas the Government of Iran continues to restrict freedom of speech and peaceful assembly, particularly for journalists and human rights activists;

Whereas the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran found in its August 2014 report that the laws and policies of the Government of Iran "continue to place overly broad restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and access to information", including "severe content restrictions, intimidation and prosecution of Internet users and limitations on Internet access through throttling and filtering";

Whereas the ability of religious freedom and human rights activists to freely express themselves, and mobilize civil society, is actively thwarted by the Government of Iran;

Whereas the Special Rapporteur found that the Government of Iran continues to apply capital punishment to offenders convicted of crimes below the international human rights law threshold of "most serious crimes"; political prisoners; and juvenile offenders, including 8 individuals in 2014 believed to be