

## Central American Women and Children Protection Act S. 1781 / H.R. 2836



*We ask you to Support and Co-Sponsor the Central American Women and Children Protection Act of 2019, and we urge inclusion of a Congressional finding on the human trafficking of Central American women and children.*

### **Background**

The bipartisan [H.R. 2836](#) was introduced in May by Representatives Norma Torres (D-CA) and Ann Wagner (R-MO) and has been referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Currently, the bill has no co-sponsors.

[S. 1781](#) was introduced in June by Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) and already has six co-sponsors with support from both Democrats and Republicans. The legislation has been referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for further action.

The legislation would authorize appropriations for the Department of State for the next three years to provide assistance to the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to increase protection of women and children in their homes and communities and reduce female homicides, domestic violence, and sexual assault.

**No funds would go directly to the governments** of El Salvador, Guatemala or Honduras and options to suspend all funding are provided. Funds will be provided to a recipient entity.

### **The bill would:**

- Authorize the U.S. Secretary of State to enter into bilateral “Women and Children Protection Compacts” with the three Northern Triangle countries to establish plans that would:
  - Strengthen their criminal justice systems and civil protection courts to protect women and children and serve victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse and neglect and hold perpetrators accountable;
  - Create and sustain safe communities to prevent and deter violence against women and children;
  - Ensure schools are safe and promote prevention and early detection of gender-based and domestic abuse within communities; and
  - Provide security within the region to families and unaccompanied children fleeing domestic, gang, or drug violence.
- Provide \$20,000,000 (House bill) or \$10,000,000 (Senate bill) each of three years (2020, 2021, 2022) to carry out the plans outlined above if the countries enter into the Compacts.
- Require reporting to Congress, including on the implementation of the compacts and information on gender-based violence, child welfare systems for unaccompanied children, violence against children, and the capacity of police, prosecution services to combat violence against women and children in the countries.

### **Why We Support this Legislation**

This bill addresses the threats to many women and children in the Northern Triangle who, because of failed or illegitimate states, are frequent victims of lawlessness and violence.

We are particularly concerned about the vulnerability of the people in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras who are living in violence and fear, in sickness and hunger, without employment and without many options.

This vulnerability often leads to exploitation of all kinds, including labor and sex trafficking, particularly for those who are forced to flee their homes in search of safety.

The Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala have among the highest homicide rates in the world. In 2017, there were 60 homicides per 100,000 people in El Salvador, 43.6 homicides per 100,000 people in Honduras, and 26.1 homicides per 100,000 people in Guatemala.

Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador are characterized by a high prevalence of drug- and gang-related violence, murder, and crimes involving gender-based violence. The region also has high rates of domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault.

Central America ranks high among regions of the world for female homicides. A combined 801 women were victims of homicide in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala in 2017 alone, according to the United Nations Office of Drug Control and Crime.

El Salvador and Honduras are both among the top 3 countries in the world with the highest child homicides rates, with more than 22 and 32 deaths per 100,000 children respectively, according to the nongovernmental organization Save the Children.

Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador governments allow impunity for perpetrators of violence against women and children, with less than 10 percent of reported cases resulting in conviction.

This bill will help address some of these protection concerns in the region.

**We also encourage inclusion of a Congressional finding in Section 2** of the bill to highlight the vulnerability to trafficking of Central American women and children, particularly those forced to flee their homes. The [United Nations High Commission for Refugees](#) and nongovernmental organizations have clearly documented these vulnerabilities.

### **Contact**

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