

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We write to express our strong opposition to the omission of reproductive rights in the State Department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices ("Human Rights Reports"), and to urge the continued inclusion of this subsection in all such future reports.

The sudden omission of this subsection from the Department's 2017 reports was highly problematic. Congress relies on the Department's accurate and unbiased reporting when considering appropriations requests for foreign assistance, and when considering legislation that could shift or influence U.S. foreign policy. The private sector relies on these reports to inform resource allocation and policy decisions for years to come. Neglecting to collect and report this information has far-reaching impact on the lives of women and girls worldwide, and represents an unjustified shift in Department practices.

The International Conference on Population and Development's (ICPD) Programme of Action, agreed to by the United States in 1994, recognized that empowering women, including by guaranteeing them access to reproductive health services, is the cornerstone of sustainable development programs. Since 1995 the Department has recognized the value of this goal, including through the work of the Office of Global Women's Issues. It stands contrary to the Department's own interests and mandate that its annual Human Rights Reports would exclude some of the most common deprivations of women's reproductive rights: maternal mortality, unsafe abortion, denial of family planning and information, and discrimination and violence against women in health care settings.

For the purposes of Human Rights Reports submitted to Congress under §116(d) and §502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and §504 of the Trade Act of 1974, the Department defines "internationally recognized human rights" as those "set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international agreements." It follows that the guidelines set forth by the ICPD Programme of Action (to which the U.S. and 178 other nations agreed), as well as the

recognition of “reproductive rights” by UN treaty bodies mandated to establish human rights law, must be used as a benchmark when designing Human Rights Reports.

Considering the above, we respectfully request answers to the following questions within 30 days:

1. What is the Department’s reasoning and justification behind the decision to remove information on reproductive rights, as well as detailed information on violence against women, from its Human Rights Reports?
2. Which Department officials were consulted and which officials ultimately made the decision to remove the reproductive rights subsection?
3. Has the Department retained information collected by reporting officers at overseas posts on reproductive rights in preparation for the 2017 Human Rights Reports, and does the Department plan to collect or release this information in 2018?
4. Does the Department plan to remove, or have officers been instructed to remove, reporting on women’s rights, the rights of LGBTI individuals, or any other previously included subsection from the 2018 Human Rights Reports or related submissions?

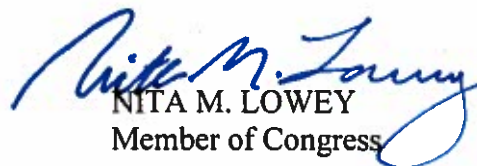
We also request that you provide:

1. All deliberative documents, internal correspondence, and instructions related to the decision to remove the reproductive rights subsection from the 2017 Human Rights Reports, including copies of the fully drafted reproductive rights subsections that were deleted from the Reports just prior to publication.
2. Instructions that have been issued to officers overseas pertaining to the drafting of the 2018 Human Rights Reports.
3. All correspondence the Department has received, including but not limited to correspondence from NGOs, citizens, other governments, and interagency channels, with regard to the deletion of the reproductive rights subsection from the 2017 Human Rights Reports.

Thank you for your attention to this request. We look forward to receiving your timely response, with accompanying materials.

Sincerely,


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Member of Congress


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ELIOT L. ENGEL
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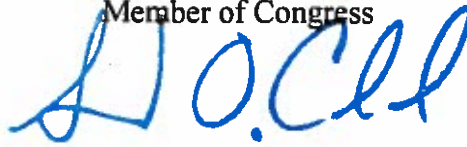
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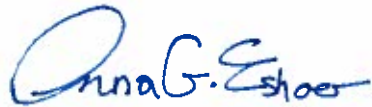
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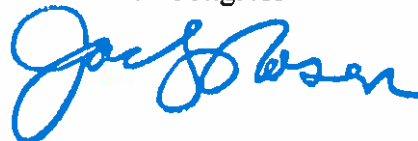
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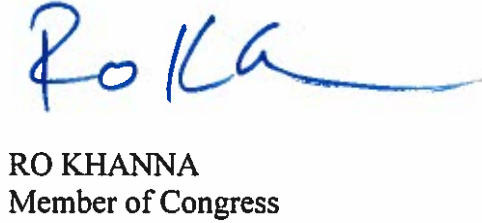
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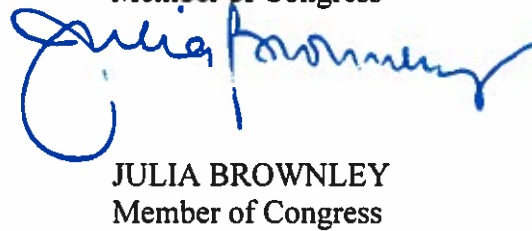
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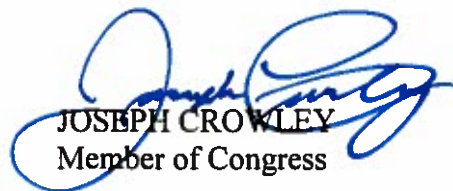
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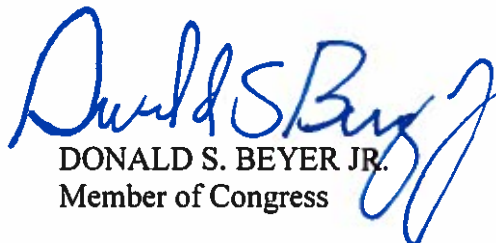
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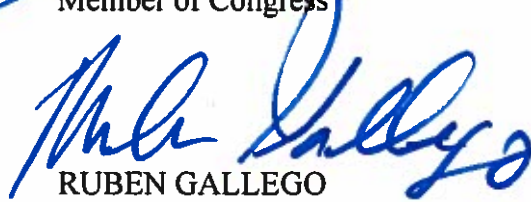
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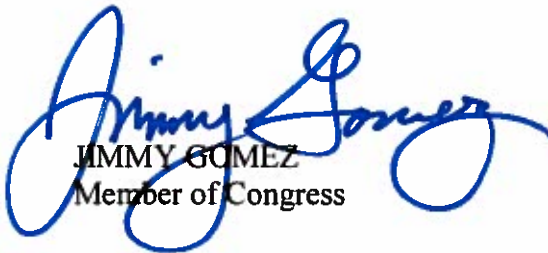
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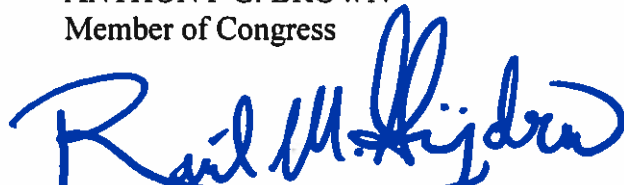

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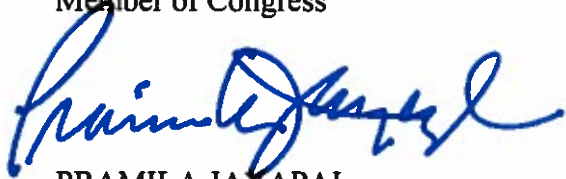
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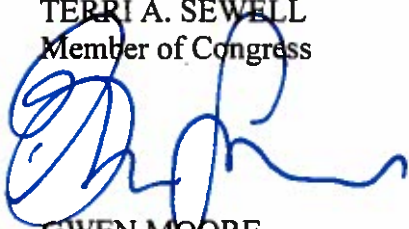
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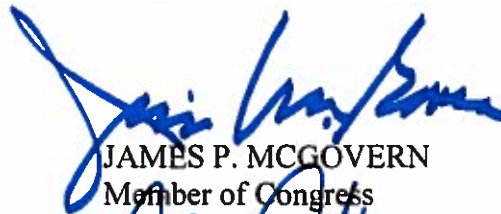
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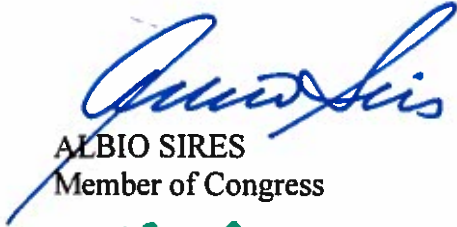
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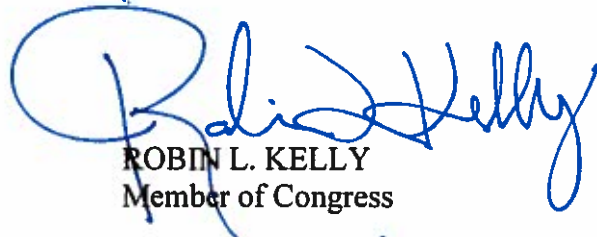
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