

NO. R-103. Joint resolution urging Congress to support the International Violence Against Women Act.

(J.R.H.13)

Offered by: Representatives Ram of Burlington, Ancel of Calais, Baker of West Rutland, Clarkson of Woodstock, Conquest of Newbury, Corcoran of Bennington, Courcelle of Rutland City, Evans of Essex, Fisher of Lincoln, French of Shrewsbury, French of Randolph, Geier of South Burlington, Heath of Westford, Hooper of Montpelier, Howard of Rutland City, Jewett of Ripton, Johnson of Canaan, Klein of East Montpelier, Lanpher of Vergennes, Lorber of Burlington, Malcolm of Pawlet, Marek of Newfane, Martin of Springfield, Martin of Wolcott, Miller of Shaftsbury, Minter of Waterbury, Mitchell of Barnard, Mook of Bennington, Nuovo of Middlebury, Orr of Charlotte, Partridge of Windham, Peltz of Woodbury, Pugh of South Burlington, Smith of Mendon, South of St. Johnsbury, Stevens of Waterbury, Sweaney of Windsor, Toll of Danville, Townsend of Randolph, Waite-Simpson of Essex, Webb of Shelburne, Wizowaty of Burlington and Zenie of Colchester

Whereas, since 1996, the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been the epicenter of the deadliest war since World War II, leading to the deaths of nearly six million people, and

Whereas, combatants on all sides routinely use rape and sexual violence as a weapon to destroy women, families, and communities, and over 200,000 women have been raped in the course of combat, and

Whereas, Vermont is home to 175 new families from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, many of them from areas that remain embattled in conflict, and

Whereas, rape is unfortunately a not-uncommon event here in Vermont, and Congolese women share the grief Vermont women experience, but rape in a war situation forces additional levels of trauma upon women, including being gang raped, enduring the violence in a family situation with their children and husbands serving as forced onlookers, and the lack of any medical care, and

Whereas, however, the international community has failed to sanction the looting of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's spectacular wealth, and consequently, poverty in this nation is extremely high, and 80 percent of the population lives on 30 cents or less per day, and

Whereas, the International Violence Against Women Act that Vice President Biden introduced while in the U.S. Senate, and that Representative Howard Berman of California introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives, will be reintroduced in Congress during the coming weeks, and it would establish in the Department of State an Advisory Commission on International Violence Against Women, and

Whereas, the bill would among other directives provide that foreign assistance programs, as well as U.S. training of foreign military and police forces, include measures designed to prevent violence against women, and

Whereas, assistance to reduce violence against women would be beneficial for many countries but it is desperately needed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and

Whereas, enactment of the International Violence Against Women Act would provide both political support and tangible assistance to the struggling women of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and

Whereas, U.S. Senator Leahy has also included funding in appropriations legislation to assist women and girls who are victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to train and support prosecutors and judges who handle these cases, and

Whereas, Congokazi Vermont is an organization of women in Vermont who came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and who are fighting to end sexual violence being perpetrated against women and children in their native country, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly urges Congress to support the International Violence Against Women Act and to include the Democratic Republic of the Congo among those nations specifically targeted to be assisted in the effort to stop this egregious violence, and be it further

Resolved: That the secretary of state be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Vermont Congressional Delegation and Congokazi Vermont.