



H.Con.Res. 139 - Expressing the sense of the Congress that the United States should address the ongoing problem of untouchability in India

Floor Situation

H.Con.Res. 139 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Rep. Trent Franks(R-AZ) on May 1, 2007. The bill was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and was passed by unanimous consent.

H.Con.Res. 139 is expected to be considered on the floor on July 23, 2007.

Summary

This legislation addresses the issue of untouchability in India. The 'Untouchables', now known as the Dalits, and the forest tribes of India, called Tribals, number approximately 250,000,000 to 300,000,000 people, are the primary victims of caste discrimination in India.

Additionally, this legislation raises the issues of caste discrimination, violence against women, and untouchability through diplomatic channels both directly with the Government of India and within the context of international bodies and inviting Dalit organizations to participate in the planning and implementation of development projects from the United States Agency for International Development and other United States development organizations.

Background

The caste system has existed in India for over 2000 years. These Dalits are educationally discriminated against, economically disenfranchised, physically abused, discriminated against when seeking medical care, religiously discriminated against, and violence towards Dalit and Tribal women is on the rise.

Despite numerous laws enacted for the protection and betterment of the Dalits and Tribals, they are still considered outcasts in Indian society and are treated as such. The majority of temple prostitutes as well as the majority of women trafficked in India are Dalit women.

Some other facts about the Dalit's situation are listed below:

- Half of India's Dalit children are undernourished.
- 21 percent are "severely underweight".
- 12 percent die before their 5th birthday.
- Official police statistics averaged over the past five years show that 13 Dalits are murdered every week.
- 5 Dalits' homes or possessions are burnt every week.
- 6 Dalits are kidnapped or abducted every week.
- 3 Dalit women are raped every day.
- Many Dalits do not report crimes for fear of reprisals by the dominant castes.

Cost

At the time of publication the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) had not yet scored this legislation.

Staff Contact

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