

SENATE RESOLUTION 581—AFFIRMING THE SUPPORT OF THE UNITED STATES FOR THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA'S ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Mr. WELCH (for himself, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. RICKETTS, and Mr. TILLIS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 581

Whereas the Republic of North Macedonia peacefully asserted and achieved independent statehood in 1991, during the course of the former Yugoslavia's violent disintegration, and has since become a secure, democratic, and prosperous country and a key United States ally and strategic partner in the Western Balkans;

Whereas North Macedonia affirmed its commitment to joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1993, adopted major defense reforms, built a modern, professional defense force, and became the 30th NATO alliance member on March 27, 2020;

Whereas, in 1993, the National Guard State Partnership Program was established between the State of Vermont and the Republic of North Macedonia;

Whereas North Macedonia was the first Western Balkan country to sign a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) and became an official EU candidate country in 2005;

Whereas, in 2008, the United States signed a Declaration of Strategic Partnership and Cooperation with North Macedonia;

Whereas, on June 17, 2018, the foreign ministers of the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of Macedonia signed the Prespa Agreement, resolving a bilateral dispute that had hindered North Macedonia's EU membership bid;

Whereas, in March 2020, European Union member states endorsed opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia, and pursuant to a July 2022 protocol, North Macedonia committed to adopt certain constitutional changes in order to resolve an additional bilateral disagreement;

Whereas, in June 2022, North Macedonia became the first Western Balkan country to start a strategic dialogue with the United States, marking a significant bilateral milestone and step toward implementation of the Declaration of Strategic Partnership;

Whereas, in November 2023, the European Commission outlined a new growth plan to provide Western Balkans countries certain EU membership benefits ahead of accession, boost economic growth, and accelerate socioeconomic convergence with the EU;

Whereas North Macedonia remains an important European Union and United States security partner and NATO ally, providing Ukraine with humanitarian aid and considerable military equipment, voting in favor of United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions against Russian aggression, and adopting all European Union Russian sanctions;

Whereas, on November 29, 2023, United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with North Macedonia's Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani and commended North Macedonia's strong contributions and leadership as the Chair-in-Office to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and reaffirmed the United States would remain a steadfast partner and ally in support of North Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic path;

Whereas, in November 2023, the European Commission adopted the 2023 Enlargement

Package and assessed that North Macedonia has continued to fully align with the European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy; and

Whereas the Government of North Macedonia has made significant progress in its work to join the European Union: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) appreciates North Macedonia's active role in regional cooperation and long-standing commitment to the European Union accession process;

(2) recognizes that there is strong support for EU membership across North Macedonia's multiethnic communities and that North Macedonia's diverse cultural heritage would be strengthened through EU membership;

(3) encourages the Government of North Macedonia to continue its important work toward membership in the European Union, as well as efforts to further peace, stability, and prosperity in Eastern Europe;

(4) recognizes the cooperation between the State of Vermont and North Macedonia and the joint military partnership between the Vermont National Guard and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia;

(5) recognizes the significant evidence of the benefits of North Macedonia's membership to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in closer economic and political ties and in its commitment to foster regional stability and the principle of mutual defense;

(6) recognizes the importance of European Union membership for North Macedonia for its economic growth, strengthening of its democratic institutions and norms, and bolstering [the] rule of law in Southeast Europe;

(7) encourages the Government of North Macedonia to undertake the reforms necessary to advance their European Union membership;

(8) calls on the President, the Secretary of State, and European allies to advocate for the opening of the first European Union negotiation cluster with North Macedonia without further bilateral conditions;

(9) urges the President and the Secretary of State to continue to—

(A) work closely with the Government of North Macedonia; and

(B) support European Union enlargement for the Western Balkans, including North Macedonia on its European Union path; and

(10) affirms the desire of the United States Government and American people to strengthen the transatlantic partnership with the European Union and all member countries.

SENATE RESOLUTION 582—SUPPORTING THE GOALS OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Ms. COLLINS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 582

Whereas, as of March 2024, there are approximately 4,045,000,000 women and girls in the world, making up ½ of the world's population;

Whereas women and girls around the world—

(1) have fundamental human rights;

(2) play a critical role in providing and caring for their families and driving positive change in their communities;

(3) contribute substantially to food security, economic growth, the prevention and resolution of conflict, and the sustainability of peace and stability;

(4) are affected in different and often disproportionate ways by global, country, and community circumstances, including economic downturns, global health concerns, conflict, and migration; and

(5) must have meaningful protections and opportunities to more fully participate in and lead the political, social, and economic lives of their communities and countries;

Whereas the advancement and empowerment of women and girls around the world is a foreign policy priority for the United States and is critical to the achievement of global peace, prosperity, and sustainability;

Whereas, on October 6, 2017, the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-68; 131 Stat. 1202) was enacted into law, which includes requirements for a government-wide "Women, Peace, and Security Strategy" to promote and strengthen the participation of women in peace negotiations and conflict prevention overseas, enhanced training for relevant United States Government personnel, and follow-up evaluations of the effectiveness of the strategy;

Whereas the United States Strategy and National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, dated October 2023, recognizes that—

(1) the "implementation of the [Women, Peace, and Security] agenda is both a moral and a strategic imperative for U.S. foreign policy and national security", reiterating that "the status of women and the stability of nations are inextricably linked";

(2) the challenges posed to the United States and the global community cannot be solved without addressing the inequities faced by ½ of the world's population; and

(3) the United States must "eliminate barriers to women's meaningful participation . . . in peace and security decision-making processes" in order to "achieve and safeguard our national security priorities" and achieve "sustainable peace, international security, and economic stability";

Whereas, according to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (commonly referred to as "UN Women"), peace negotiations are more likely to end in a peace agreement when women and women's groups play a meaningful role in the negotiation process;

Whereas, according to a study by the International Peace Institute, a peace agreement is 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years if women participate in the development of the peace agreement;

Whereas, according to the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs of the Department of State, the full and meaningful participation of women in criminal justice professions and security forces vastly enhances the effectiveness of the resulting workforces;

Whereas, despite the contributions of women to society, hundreds of millions of women and girls around the world continue to be denied the right to participate freely in civic and economic life, lack fundamental legal protections, and remain vulnerable to exploitation and abuse;

Whereas, every year, approximately 12,000,000 girls are married before they reach the age of 18, which means that—

(1) nearly 33,000 girls are married every day; or

(2) nearly 23 girls are married every minute;

Whereas, despite global progress, it is predicted that by 2030 more than 150,000,000 more girls will marry before reaching the age of 18, and approximately 2,400,000 girls who are married before reaching the age of 18 are under the age of 15;

Whereas girls living in countries affected by conflict or other humanitarian crises are often the most vulnerable to child marriage,

and 9 of the 10 countries with the highest rates of child marriage are considered fragile or extremely fragile;

Whereas, on August 15, 2021, the Taliban entered Kabul, Afghanistan, and toppled the elected government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, resulting in de facto Taliban rule over the people of Afghanistan;

Whereas the Taliban continues to restrict the ability of women and girls to exist in Afghan society, including by—

(1) prohibiting girls from going to school past sixth grade, including banning women from attending university;

(2) limiting the employment that women can pursue outside of their households;

(3) mandating that women cover their heads and faces in public and punishing those who wear brightly colored clothing;

(4) restricting the independent movement of women and girls;

(5) closing domestic abuse shelters, sometimes forcing residents to return to their abusive families;

(6) preventing women aid workers from operating in Afghanistan, thus restricting operations in support of humanitarian assistance for all Afghans;

(7) jailing women human rights defenders; and

(8) limiting access to women's healthcare, including preventative and emergency services, and requiring a male chaperone at most clinics and hospitals;

Whereas, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (commonly referred to as "UNICEF")—

(1) globally, 1 in 5 girls between the ages of 10 and 19 have experienced recent intimate partner violence;

(2) approximately 120,000,000 girls worldwide, about 1 in 10, have experienced forced sexual acts; and

(3) an estimated 1 in 3 women around the world has experienced some form of physical or sexual violence;

Whereas the overall level of violence against women is a better predictor of the peacefulness of a country, the compliance of a country with international treaty obligations, and the relations of a country with neighboring countries than indicators measuring the level of democracy, level of wealth, or level of institutionalization of the country;

Whereas women around the world remain vastly underrepresented in government positions, as women account for only 25.6 percent of national parliamentarians and 21 percent of government ministers;

Whereas the ability of women and girls to realize their full potential is critical to the ability of a country to achieve strong and lasting economic growth, self-reliance, and political and social stability;

Whereas, although the United Nations Millennium Project reached the goal of achieving gender parity in primary education in most countries in 2015, the COVID-19 global pandemic has deepened gender inequality in education and more work remains to be done to achieve gender equality in primary and secondary education, particularly in secondary education worldwide as gender gaps persist and widen, by addressing—

(1) discriminatory practices;

(2) harmful cultural and social norms;

(3) inadequate sanitation facilities, including facilities to manage menstruation;

(4) child, early, and forced marriage;

(5) poverty;

(6) food insecurity and malnutrition;

(7) early pregnancy and motherhood;

(8) conflict and insecurity; and

(9) other factors that favor boys or devalue girls' education;

Whereas, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization—

(1) approximately 118,500,000 girls between the ages of 6 and 17 remain out of school;

(2) girls living in countries affected by conflict are 2.5 times more likely to be out of primary school than boys;

(3) girls are twice as likely as boys to never set foot in a classroom; and

(4) up to 30 percent of girls who drop out of school do so because of adolescent pregnancy or child marriage;

Whereas women around the world face a variety of constraints that severely limit their economic participation and productivity and remain underrepresented in the labor force;

Whereas, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations—

(1) agriculture and food systems are a major source of livelihoods, particularly for rural women;

(2) wage and productivity gaps persist in agriculture and food systems, despite the crucial role that women play in those sectors;

(3) the work of women in agriculture and food systems is more likely than that of men to be part-time, irregular, informal, vulnerable, labor-intensive, and low-skilled;

(4) in countries reporting on Sustainable Development Goal 5.a.1, more men than women are owners or have rights to agricultural land;

(5) the gender gap in food insecurity is growing and has reached 4.3 percentage points, with more women experiencing severe and moderate food insecurity in all regions than men; and

(6) the empowerment of women can have important benefits for agricultural productivity, nutrition, and food security;

Whereas the economic empowerment of women is inextricably linked to a myriad of other internationally recognized human rights that are essential to the ability of women to thrive as economic actors, including—

(1) living lives free of violence and exploitation;

(2) achieving the highest possible standard of health and well-being;

(3) enjoying full legal and human rights, such as access to registration, identification, and citizenship documents, and freedom of movement;

(4) access to formal and informal education;

(5) access to, and equal protection under, land and property rights;

(6) access to fundamental labor rights;

(7) the implementation of policies to address disproportionate care burdens; and

(8) receiving business and management skills and leadership opportunities;

Whereas the Millennium Challenge Corporation (commonly referred to as the "MCC"), an independent United States foreign assistance agency, recognizes that inequality and the exclusion of women from economic opportunities can inhibit efforts to promote economic growth and reduce poverty and decrease a country's economic growth trajectory, which is why the gender policy of the MCC requires gender inequalities to be identified and considered in every stage of agreements with participating countries;

Whereas, according to the World Health Organization, global maternal mortality decreased by approximately 38 percent from 2000 to 2017, yet approximately 810 women and girls continue to die from preventable causes relating to pregnancy or childbirth each day, and 94 percent of all maternal deaths occur in developing countries, putting the global community off-track to meeting Sustainable Development Goal 3.1 for reducing maternal deaths;

Whereas the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that

women and girls comprise approximately ½ of the 78,900,000 refugees and internally displaced or stateless individuals in the world;

Whereas the Russian invasion of Ukraine that began on February 24, 2022, has resulted in a disproportionate number of women and children seeking safety outside of Ukraine;

Whereas those women and girls, like women and girls in all humanitarian emergencies, including those subject to forced displacement, face increased and exacerbated vulnerabilities to—

(1) gender-based violence, including rape, child marriage, domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation and assault;

(2) disruptions in education and livelihood;

(3) lack of access to health services; and

(4) food insecurity and malnutrition;

Whereas malnutrition poses a variety of threats to women and girls specifically, as malnutrition can weaken their immune systems, making them more susceptible to infections, and affects their capacity to survive childbirth, and children born of malnourished women and girls are more likely to have cognitive impairments and higher risk of disease throughout their lives;

Whereas it is imperative—

(1) to alleviate violence and discrimination against women and girls; and

(2) to afford women and girls every opportunity to be equal members of their communities; and

Whereas March 8, 2024, is recognized as International Women's Day, a global day—

(1) to celebrate the economic, political, and social achievements of women in the past, present, and future; and

(2) to recognize the obstacles that women face in the struggle for equal rights and opportunities: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goals of International Women's Day;

(2) recognizes that the fundamental human rights of women and girls have intrinsic value that affect the quality of life of women and girls;

(3) recognizes that the empowerment of women and girls is inextricably linked to the potential of a country to generate—

(A) economic growth and self-reliance;

(B) sustainable peace and democracy; and

(C) inclusive security;

(4) recognizes and honors individuals in the United States and around the world, including women human rights defenders, activists, and civil society leaders, who have worked throughout history to ensure that women and girls are guaranteed equality and fundamental human rights;

(5) applauds the women around the world who stand against oppression in any form and fight for a better future, especially in Ukraine, Iran, and Afghanistan;

(6) recognizes the unique cultural, historical, and religious differences throughout the world and urges the United States Government to act with respect and understanding toward legitimate differences when promoting any policies;

(7) reaffirms the commitment—

(A) to end discrimination and violence against women and girls;

(B) to ensure the safety, health, and welfare of women and girls;

(C) to pursue policies that guarantee the fundamental human rights of women and girls worldwide; and

(D) to promote meaningful and significant participation of women in every aspect of society and community, including conflict prevention, protection, peacemaking, and peacebuilding;

(8) supports sustainable, measurable, and global development that seeks to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and

(9) encourages the people of the United States to observe International Women's Day with appropriate programs and activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 583—RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES AND THE SUPPORT IT PROVIDES TO MUNICIPALITIES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

Ms. SMITH (for herself, Mr. TILLIS, and Mr. YOUNG) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 583

Whereas the National League of Cities is the oldest and largest organization representing municipal governments throughout the United States, representing the interests of more than 19,000 cities, towns, and villages across the country and collectively more than 218,000,000 residents;

Whereas the National League of Cities, originally named the American Municipal Association, was founded in 1924 in Lawrence, Kansas, by State municipal leagues seeking more coordination and national representation as cities, towns, and villages expanded rapidly following the Industrial Revolution;

Whereas, today, the National League of Cities works in partnership with 49 State municipal leagues across the country to strengthen local leadership, drive innovation, and influence policies that impact local programs and operations;

Whereas, as the voice in Washington that represents cities, towns, and villages across the United States, the National League of Cities has successfully championed Federal legislative solutions that support municipalities and has worked closely with Congress, educating Members of Congress on the realities of local implementation of proposed Federal legislation;

Whereas the National League of Cities has a history of championing the passage of foundational Federal legislation and bolstering Congress' efforts to strengthen essential services that municipalities provide to their communities;

Whereas the National League of Cities is proud that 21 percent of the membership of the Senate and the House of Representatives, or 115 elected Members of Congress, are former local elected officials;

Whereas the National League of Cities supported the creation of the Former Local Elected Officials Caucus, which brings together Members of Congress who previously served in local government, to improve intergovernmental partnership and ensure that the voices of local governments are heard in Federal decision-making; and

Whereas, two National League of Cities' presidents, Senator Richard G. Lugar, former mayor of Indianapolis, Indiana, and Senator George Voinovich, former mayor of Cleveland, Ohio, went on to have distinguished careers in the United States Senate and worked closely with local leaders to strengthen the Federal-local partnership: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the United States Senate recognizes—

(1) the 100th anniversary of the National League of Cities; and

(2) the role that the National League of Cities will play in the next century in supporting municipalities with—

- (A) unparalleled research;
- (B) technical expertise; and

(C) relentless advocacy as a key partner in preserving and strengthening the Federal-local partnership.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 30—EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE RECOGNITION OF MARCH 10, 2024, AS "ABORTION PROVIDER APPRECIATION DAY"

Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. PETERS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. FETTERMAN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. WELCH, Ms. WARREN, Ms. BUTLER, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. SMITH, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. MURPHY, and Mr. HEINRICH) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. CON. RES. 30

Whereas March 10 has been established as a day to show appreciation for the essential, high-quality care that abortion providers and staff provide to their communities and those traveling to their communities, and to celebrate their courage, compassion, and dedication to their work;

Whereas March 10 was selected for "Abortion Provider Appreciation Day" in honor of Dr. David Gunn, who was killed on March 10, 1993, outside his abortion clinic in Pensacola, Florida, by a White supremacist and anti-abortion extremist in the first known instance of the murder of an abortion provider;

Whereas abortions are provided in-person and through telehealth by facilities such as independent clinics, Planned Parenthood health care centers, hospitals, and private offices of doctors, and all of the staff working for those facilities are essential to ensuring patients receive needed care;

Whereas, on June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States erroneously overturned *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973), in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, 597 U.S. 215 (2022) (referred to in this preamble as "the Dobbs decision"), reversing decades of legal precedent affirming the right to an abortion and unleashing devastation on an already precarious abortion access landscape;

Whereas, following the Dobbs decision, States across the United States moved to further restrict access to abortion care and 21 States have banned some or all access to an abortion;

Whereas, because of State abortion bans and restrictions, scores of clinics and health care centers in already underserved areas have closed, forcing more patients to travel out-of-State for abortion care, increasing wait times, straining already thin resources, and pushing people farther and farther away from their homes;

Whereas abortion providers and all staff play a critical role in a world where it has become increasingly difficult for individuals to receive essential and time-sensitive care once those individuals have made decisions that are right for their bodies, lives, and futures;

Whereas abortion providers and all staff help to ensure that all individuals who can become pregnant can make their own decisions about their bodies and their pregnancies, and support the decisions of their patients by treating them with dignity, empathy, compassion, and respect, despite numerous challenges due to abortion bans and restrictions;

Whereas abortion providers and all staff play an essential role within the reproductive justice framework, which was created by 12 Black women in 1994, who formulated a

human rights framework that demands every person has the human right to bodily autonomy, which includes the right to choose if, when, and how to have children and the right to parent children in safe and sustainable communities;

Whereas individuals seeking abortion care across the United States also rely on the work of abortion funds and practical support organizations to access abortion care for themselves and their families;

Whereas abortion funds and practical support organizations that rely on donations face increasing demand following the Dobbs decision as individuals are forced to travel longer distances, find childcare or lodging, and raise money to obtain an abortion and cover associated costs;

Whereas restrictions on abortion care have far-reaching consequences that deepen existing inequities and worsen health outcomes for pregnant people and people giving birth;

Whereas people who are denied abortion care are more likely to experience high blood pressure and other serious medical conditions during the end of pregnancy, remain in relationships where interpersonal violence is present, and experience poverty;

Whereas research shows that States that have more abortion restrictions are also States that have poorer maternal health outcomes;

Whereas the effects of the Dobbs decision were immediate and disastrous, with abortion being entirely banned in 14 States as of March 2024;

Whereas 1 in 3 women of reproductive age, plus more trans and nonbinary people, are blocked from accessing an abortion in their home State;

Whereas restricting and banning access to abortion care—

(1) limits the ability of current and future providers to obtain necessary education and training in abortion care;

(2) exposes the remaining abortion providers and clinic staff to increased levels of harassment and politically motivated restrictions; and

(3) creates and increases the out-of-pocket costs and logistical burdens that patients face to get care to a level that is sometimes insurmountable, forcing patients to remain pregnant;

Whereas the 2022 Violence and Disruption Report of the National Abortion Federation found an alarming escalation in incidents of obstruction, vandalism, and trespassing at abortion clinics, with abortion providers reporting an alarming rate of death threats and threats of harm, and documented 218 incidents in 2022;

Whereas Black, indigenous, and other providers and patients of color face heightened levels of threats, harassment, and violence as compared to their White counterparts;

Whereas the Dobbs decision has emboldened antiabortion individuals and groups to continue to harass providers and the patients they care for;

Whereas the Dobbs decision threatens the ability of abortion providers and staff to serve their patients; and

Whereas, in the face of multifaceted attacks on their work, abortion providers remain an essential and valued part of their communities, providing high-quality, compassionate, and necessary health care, and courageously delivering that care despite pressures, restrictions, political interference, and violent threats to their personal safety: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress—

(1) recognizes "Abortion Provider Appreciation Day" on March 10, 2024, to celebrate the courage, compassion, and high-quality care that abortion providers and staff offer