

FIRST 100 DAYS NEWSLETTER

MARCH 4, 2021

National Council of Jewish Women

What a week! COVID relief legislation passed in the House!

Speaker Nancy Pelosi was able to add more working days to the legislative calendar to focus on other policy priorities. NCJW is working behind the scenes to bring the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization bill to the House floor for a vote. And NCJW remains committed to helping confirm our pal Kristen Clarke as head of the Civil Rights Division - [join us at 6 pm on Facebook live!](#)

In an effort to share our institutional priorities and advancements coming from the new administration, NCJW has been sending this newsletter to our entire list of advocates. Beginning next week on Thursday, March 11, this will go only to two groups: NCJW leadership (no action needed) and advocates like you. Don't want to miss continued updates?

Fill out this form and stay up-to-date.

**Please note - if you've already filled out the form, you do not need to fill it out again!

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE NOMINATIONS - SPECIAL ALERT

The Biden administration has nominated two NCJW partners for important positions in the Justice Department. **NCJW supports Vanita Gupta for Associate Attorney General and Kristen Clarke to head the Civil Rights Division.**

TAKE ACTION NOW! Watch Sheila Katz's conversation with Kristen Clarke on Facebook live (facebook.com/ncjwinc) tonight at 6:00 pm EST!

- Sign your section or organization on to our Jewish community [letter](#) in support of Vanita Gupta's nomination.
- [Call your senators](#) and urge their support for Vanita Gupta and Kristen Clarke.
- Join our [digital action activities](#) on March 8 before Vanita's hearing and all month as both nominees go through the confirmation process.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BILL REINTRODUCED IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

What is it?

The Do No Harm Act (HR 1378), which preserves the Religious Freedom Restoration Act's (RFRA) protection of religious freedom while clarifying that it cannot be used to harm others, was reintroduced in the House of Representatives on February 25. Amending the law will safeguard personal beliefs and prevent entire institutions or individuals from unlawfully discriminating against or coercing the exercise of another's conscience.

How does it relate to our past work?

NCJW supported RFRA when it first passed in 1993. The law was intended to protect the free exercise of religion and religious minorities, such as when a Sikh student was prohibited from wearing a turban at school or when a Jewish government worker was refused time off for Rosh Hashanah. However, since then, federal, state, and local governments across the country have blatantly manipulated the law in the name of "conscience rights" and "religious liberty." The Do No Harm Act would ensure that RFRA is never again abused in this way by clarifying that the law cannot be used to harm others.

What can I do now?

TAKE ACTION NOW! [Use our Action Alert](#) to urge your lawmakers to support the Do No Harm Act to restore RFRA to its original intent and protect freedom of and from religion today.

ADDITIONAL ADVANCEMENTS

American Rescue Plan: The House of Representatives passed their COVID relief plan (HR 1319) on February 27 with many [NCJW's priorities](#), including a \$15 minimum wage. Debate began in the Senate on March 3, and the Senate has changed the stimulus checks structure to impose stricter limits. They will likely remove the \$15 minimum wage increase to get it passed before March 14, which is when expanded Unemployment Insurance benefits expire.

HR 5: The Equality Act (HR 5) passed the House of Representatives on February 25. This bill adds explicit protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity to our civil rights laws. The bill would also add and expand legal protections for women, people of color, and many other communities. [NCJW encouraged representatives to vote yes and celebrated its passage!](#)

NO BAN Act: The NO BAN Act, which would prevent future administrations from banning entire communities from entering the United States, was [introduced](#) to the House of Representatives on February 25. On his [first day in office](#), President Biden [rescinded](#) the Muslim and African Ban, which banned visitors and immigrants from several countries, most of which were majority-Muslim. However, it's still critical to pass this legislation to prevent similar bans from happening in the future.

For the People Act: The House of Representatives passed HR 1, the For the People Act, on March 3. This bill strengthens and restores voting rights, offers new protections for voters, ends the dominance of big money in politics and implements anti-corruption, pro-ethics measures to clean up government. NCJW organized nearly 80 national, state, and local Jewish organizations to sign a [letter](#) to the House supporting the bill and a [recommendation](#) that representatives vote yes. NCJW CEO Sheila Katz participated in a [livestream](#) during the vote. **NCJW applauds the passage of HR 1 in the House and will next focus on the Senate.**

Dream and Promise Act: This bill, **long supported by NCJW**, would provide a path to citizenship for young immigrants brought to the US as children and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders. (TPS allows people whose countries face war or natural disaster to live and work in the US). On March 3, it was introduced in the House of Representatives. The Senate's equivalent of this bill — actually two bills, the Dream Act and SECURE Act — has already been introduced. **NCJW supports a path to citizenship for all 11 million undocumented people in the US and urges Congress to pass this bill.**

Nominations:

- **Merrick Garland, Attorney General.** Approved on March 1
- **Miguel Cardona, Secretary of the US Department of Education.** Approved on March 1
- **Neera Tanden, Office of Management and Budget.** Withdrawn on March 2. President Biden is expected to appoint Tanden to a position in his administration that doesn't require Senate confirmation.
- **Xavier Becerra, US Department of Health and Human Services.** Moved to the Senate floor for a vote following a tie) in the Senate Finance Committee on March 3.



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