

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4005

As Passed House
March 1, 1993

Brief Description: Asking the White House to condemn rape and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and create a war crimes tribunal.

Sponsors: Representatives Basich, Linville, Kessler, Riley, Romero, Orr, Brumsickle, Chappell, Leonard, Quall, Jacobsen, Ballard, Dunshee, Miller, Heavey, Sheldon, Anderson, Eide, Bray, Lemmon, G. Cole, Kremen, Vance, Wineberry, Pruitt, Sheahan, Campbell, King, Cothorn, Flemming, Johanson, Padden, Schoesler, J. Kohl and Lisk.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, February 8, 1993, DP;
Passed House, March 1, 1993, 90-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members:
Representatives Anderson, Chair; Veloria, Vice Chair; Reams, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Conway; and King.

Staff: Bonnie Austin (786-7135).

Background: Various international agreements enacted in this century prohibit the abuse of civilians in wartime. The Hague Convention in 1907 prohibited attacks on undefended civilian targets. The Geneva Conventions of 1929 and 1949 established strict guidelines for the treatment of prisoners of war and civilians caught in war zones. The Genocide Convention of 1951 prohibited acts which are intended to destroy a national, ethnic or religious group. The Genocide Convention also requires that the United Nations (U.N.) take action to stop genocide.

Reports out of Bosnia indicate that the Serbians are committing a campaign of massive, organized and systematic genocide or "ethnic cleansing" against Muslims. This "ethnic cleansing" involves, among other atrocities, the detention and rape of Muslim women. Estimates of the number of victims range from 30,000 to 50,000. Reports of entire villages being converted into rape camps have been made, with Muslim women and children being raped until they

die or become pregnant. Pregnant women in these camps are held until they give birth to Serbian babies.

On December 18, 1992, the U.N. Security Council voted unanimously to condemn "atrocities committed against women, particularly Muslim women, in Bosnia and Herzegovina." Various calls have been made for a war crimes tribunal. In response, the U.N. Security Council has created a five member Commission of Experts to investigate war crimes in the Balkans. The last time a similar group was assembled was in 1943 when the Allies began assembling evidence against the Nazis.

Summary of Bill: The members of the Washington State Senate and the House of Representatives ask President Clinton, the United States Congress, and the members of the United Nations to condemn the ethnic cleansing and rape of women in Bosnia and to create an international war crimes tribunal.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The atrocities being committed against Muslim women and children in Bosnia require international action. The United Nations and the European Community should be doing more to stop this. The United States should be doing more to stop this. This systematic, organized mass "ethnic cleansing" and rape is barbaric and repugnant to the civilized world.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Bob Basich, State Representative, Prime sponsor of bill (pro).