



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on March 22, 2021

## House Passes Violence Against Women Act That Puts American Women at Risk

Another attack on everyday Americans by Democrats wended its way through the Democrat-led lower chamber of Congress on Wednesday, March 17, when the [Violence Against Women Act \(VAWA\) of 2021](#) passed in a vote of 244-172.

Hidden in the language of a bill that would be expected to garner bipartisan support for its increased protections and services for domestic-abuse and sexual-assault victims are provisions seeking tighter gun-control restrictions and allowing men identifying as women in women's shelters.



Photo: Tinnakorn Jorruang / iStock / Getty Images Plus

While the extensive legislation touts enhanced safeguards for women and victims of abuse, Republicans argue that a number of new revisions in fact place women at risk. The VAWA moves to the Senate next, where it's likely to be stalled by a Republican filibuster.

Anticipating significant GOP opposition, Democrats have in turn pledged to create individual bills to advance gun measures that they claim are desperately needed owing to the soaring rise of gun sales in 2020.

As reported by *The Trace*, a bipartisan bill separate from the VAWA, introduced by Representative Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.), cosponsored with Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Penn.), seeks to ban guns for convicted stalkers. The Lori Jackson Domestic Violence Survivor Protection Act, introduced by Senate Democrats, would prohibit subjects of temporary restraining orders from possessing guns.

Notably, Wednesday's vote included 29 of 211 House Republicans who joined Democrats favoring the nearly half-century-old VAWA law, first introduced in 1990 by then-senator Joe Biden. *Newsweek* reported a [full list](#) of Republicans who voted against the latest iteration.

The VAWA became law in 1994, expired in 2018 but was reintroduced in 2019 as [H.R. 1585](#) by Representative Karen Bass (D-Calif.). The 2019 version of the bill sought to close the so-called "[boyfriend loophole](#)," which would extend existing federal laws preventing the purchase of firearms to "dating partners" convicted of misdemeanor stalking. Currently, federal law bars spouses, live-in partners, and people with children together who have been convicted of domestic violence from owning a gun.

Despite passage in the House, the 2019 reauthorization bill quickly died in the Republican-controlled Senate. The bill has been picked up once again for renewal in 2021.

During his presidential bid, candidate Biden campaigned on the legislation's "comprehensive approach to violence against women." As president, affirming his promise to advance the reauthorization of VAWA in his first 100 days in office, Biden has urged the Senate to "strengthen the landmark law," citing the rise in domestic abuse cases during the COVID-19 lockdowns as an "urgent crisis."



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In a [statement](#) from the White House, Biden declared that “VAWA has transformed the way our country responds to violence against women. And, with each re-authorization, Congress has expanded VAWA’s provisions on a bipartisan basis to improve protections, including for Native American women and survivors from underserved communities, and improve efforts to prevent intimate partner violence.”

Now known as [H.R. 1620](#), the VAWA of 2021 was reintroduced by Representative Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas), whose radical gun-control proposals this year alone ([H.R. 8](#) and [H.R. 1446](#)) pose dire threats to the Second Amendment-protected right to keep and bear arms.

Said Representative Lee, “After its initial enactment a quarter-century ago, VAWA — through policy reforms, interstate cooperation and grant allocation — has been pivotal in providing a national response to protecting half of the population. Equally important, it has ushered in a seismic transformation on how society perceives violence against women.”

The reality is no one is safe from violence if Democrats are allowed to continue to take away the rights that allow Americans to protect and defend themselves.

Representative Lee has rigorously pushed for building a national firearm registry, releasing registered gun owners’ information to the public, and making private gun sales without a license illegal. But again, such legislation will only make it harder for law-abiding citizens to secure a firearm; it will in no way ensure that guns stay out of the hands of violent criminals.

Among those Republicans opposing the latest version of VAWA is Representative Doug LaMalfa (R-Calif.), who has cosponsored an alternative reauthorization bill introduced by Congressman Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.), which would guarantee the continuation of federal funding for VAWA grant programs while Congress works to reach a final resolution.

According to *Newsweek*, “In its three renewals, the VAWA has been widened to include programs protecting elderly women and women with disabilities. Its renewals have also provided more funding for rape prevention and protections for survivors of trafficking. The latest renewal would give \$40 million to develop violence-prevention programs for non-English speaking communities and communities of color. It would also give Native American tribes jurisdiction to prosecute some violent acts against women committed by non-tribal members.”

For [LaMalfa](#), the altered VAWA “promotes unproven methods of victim treatment that could force a victim to confront her abuser, restricts the tools available to prosecute domestic violence cases, and fails to provide exemptions for religious organizations who run shelters and legal aid centers.” He continued, “The most glaring example of [the bill’s potential harm to women] is it would force women’s shelters to accept men who claim to be women or lose federal grant funding. This puts women who are fleeing abusive and dangerous situations in harm’s way rather than offering protection.”

The congressman pointed to a women’s homeless shelter in Fresno, California, where a transgender man reportedly sexually harassed nine women. In a press release, he urged Democrats “to stop playing politics with programs that protect women and instead pass a reauthorization focused on helping women and children escape violence.”

Responding to the bill’s implementation of stricter gun measures, Congressman Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) wrote in a recent [op-ed](#), “Restricting a law-abiding citizen’s ability to acquire a gun will not protect our communities from wrongdoers. It’s likely that the opposite will be true.” “Republicans are not opposed to screening perspective gun owners, and we — along with Americans across the country — support keeping guns out of the hands of criminals. Congress must ensure that our background



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check system is as accurate, up-to-date, and efficient as possible, and Republicans have already supported efforts to address these issues.”

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) confirmed that Senator Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), a survivor of sexual assault, is leading the GOP opposition to VAWA, working on her own bipartisan revision. To the *Wall Street Journal*, Ernst commented, “Certainly we ran into hiccups with some of the gun issues and that’s a big one for a number of us — stripping away people’s constitutional rights is not something that we should be doing.”

Ernst is right, if we don’t protect our freedoms, we are going to lose them. After 53 weeks of a projected two-week lockdown, America is operating nowhere near close to normal. Of course, Ernst doesn’t go far enough here. All federal legislation having to do with gun control, rape, stalking, and gender issues are blatantly unconstitutional. When laws are passed at the local or state level, it is far easier to get rid of or revamp laws that don’t work. Again, this is a case of purported good intentions being used to punish the American people and keep them from having a say in the rules they live under.

Feeling the squeeze of strict government regulations, many citizens are sensing the danger of extreme left-wing policies presented under the guise of “protections, health, and safety.” Fortunately, freedom-loving Americans won’t lie down quietly.

In 2020, an astounding five million Americans became first-time gun owners, according to a [survey](#) from the National Shooting Sports Foundation. And in January-February 2021, a record-breaking [7.7 million](#) background checks for firearm purchases were processed by the FBI’s National Instant Criminal Background Check System. Clearly, those previously “gun shy” are awakening to the reality of an uncertain future under a Biden presidency.

It bears repeating that American independence was won by a well-armed militia defending liberty against tyranny. And while the constitutionally protected right that makes all other rights possible — the right to keep and bear arms — is legitimately under fire, it appears Senate Republicans will indeed have another chance to thwart the Democrats’ ambitious gun-control agenda. Hopefully, as in 2019, they will win again.



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