



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 23, 2015

## Senate Compromise on Trafficking Bill Cleared Way for Lynch Vote

Republican Senate leaders announced on April 21 that they had reached an agreement with Democrats to pass the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (S. 178), which they insisted must be accomplished before voting on confirmation of President Obama's nominee for Attorney General, Loretta Lynch (shown).



*The Hill* quoted Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's (R-Ky.) announcement from the Senate floor:

I'm glad we can say there is a bipartisan proposal that will allow us to complete action on this legislation so we can provide help to the victims who desperately need it. As soon as we finish the trafficking bill, as I've indicated for some time now, we'll move to the president's nominee for attorney general in the next day or so.

The legislation passed on April 22 by a vote of 99-0. The only senator not voting was Ted Cruz (R-Texas).

The bill's lead sponsor, Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas), said in a statement following the vote: "Our work is not finished" on curbing human trafficking.

In our [article for \*The New American\* posted on March 12](#), we noted that Senate Democrats, after discovering that S. 178 (and its companion bill, H.R. 181) contained provisions that would revive the Hyde Amendment's restrictions on federal funding for abortion, came out against the legislation — demanding that the language they objected to be removed.

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said in a statement on the Senate floor on March 11: "If my friend, the Republican leader [Mitch McConnell], is so in tune with getting this passed, take that [abortion funding restricting] legislation out of the bill. Otherwise, it will not pass."

That is exactly what the Senate Republican leadership decided to do.

*The Hill* reported that Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Democratic Conference Secretary Patty Murray (Wash.) negotiated compromise language on abortion to satisfy the Democrats' objections.

The agreement, reports *The Hill*, establishes a domestic trafficking victims' fund paid for with federal dollars and money collected from criminal offenders. It preserves the prohibition on federal funds being used to pay for abortion services but does not expand on it.

According to the compromise, the tax dollars appropriated by Congress cannot be used to pay for abortions, but the money collected from the offenders can.

"I'm thrilled we were finally able to come together to break the impasse over this vital legislation, and I look forward to swift passage in the Senate so we can ensure victims of human trafficking receive the resources they need to restore their lives," Cornyn said.



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“After weeks of stalling on the bipartisan human trafficking bill, our Republican colleagues have agreed not to expand the scope of the Hyde language,” Reid said.

The original Hyde Amendment, passed in 1976, was named for its chief sponsor, Representative Henry Hyde, (R-Ill.) It prohibited the use of certain federal funds to pay for abortions, unless a pregnancy resulted from incest or rape. It was never a permanent law in itself, but has continued, in different forms, as a rider to annual appropriations bills passed since 1976.

Despite the latest controversy, the word “abortion” does not appear in the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. However, Democrats objected to the original bill’s language stating that “Amounts in the Fund, or otherwise transferred from the Fund, shall be subject to the limitations on the use or expending of amounts described in [the “Cromnibus”] Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014.”

Since the “Cromnibus,” (according to its summary on the House Republicans’ website) “maintained all existing pro-life policy and funding provisions that have been carried in Appropriations legislation in previous years, including the Hyde Amendment,” the original Trafficking Act would also have maintained that policy.

Since the Republican leadership was determined not to consider the Lynch nomination for Attorney General until after the logjam over the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act was broken, the Senate will, as McConnell said, now “move on.”

And move on they did. The Senate voted today to confirm Lynch as the next attorney general, by a 56-43 vote. Reuters reported that 10 Republicans voted for Lynch, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

*Photo of Loretta Lynch: AP Images*

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