

State of Vermont House of Representatives



Montpelier, Vermont

Joint House Resolution

J.R.H. 11

Joint resolution urging the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution in the United States

Offered by: Representatives Christie of Hartford, Elder of Starksboro, Lipsky of Stowe, McGill of Bridport, Quimby of Lyndon, and Templeman of Brownington

Whereas, the United States is a champion of human rights around the world, and it is essential to promote a culture of human rights here at home, and

Whereas, on December 20, 1993, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted Resolution 48/134, which encouraged the “establishment and strengthening of national institutions” on human rights, and, equally important, the UN General Assembly adopted an annex to the resolution, officially referred to as the Paris Principles, which sets forth principles relating to the status of national institutions of human rights, and

Whereas, on March 15, 2006, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 60/251 establishing the UN Human Rights Council, the UN-member organization that addresses human rights matters, and

Whereas, on October 7, 2022, the UN Human Rights Council adopted Resolution 51/31, National human rights institutions, that “[e]ncourages States to establish effective, independent and pluralistic national human rights institutions or, where they already exist, to strengthen them,” and

Whereas, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, as of December 20, 2023, 88 nations have established National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) that are fully compliant with the 1993 Paris Principles, and an additional 32 others have formed NHRIs that are partially compliant with those Principles, and

Whereas, the United States does not have an NHRI or similar governmental office, and

Whereas, the establishment of an NHRI in the United States could provide focus and direction to national efforts to promote and protect human rights and provide important assistance to the efforts of state and local human rights commissions and tribal governments, and

Whereas, on December 15, 2022, many U.S. academic, advocacy, civic, and legal organizations and associated individuals wrote to Ambassador Susan Rice, then-Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, requesting the creation of a federal commission to study establishing an NHRI in this country, and

Whereas, in 1966, separate from the establishment of the UN Human Rights Council, the world's nations adopted the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which established the UN Human Rights Committee (the Committee), a panel that regularly reviews the ICCPR's signatory nations' compliance with this agreement, and

Whereas, in the fall of 2023, an ad hoc coalition consisting of American and international organizations concerned about human rights submitted to the Committee a report finding that “[t]o achieve full implementation of the ICCPR, the United States must establish an NHRI in accordance with the Paris Principles,” now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly urges the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution in the United States, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to President Joseph R. Biden, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield, and the Vermont Congressional Delegation.