

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Joint Resolution 3 (Senator Lee, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Rules and Executive Nominations

**Honoring the Surviving Human Trafficking Victims of Asia and the Pacific
Islands During World War II**

This joint resolution recognizes “ianfu” or “comfort women” of World War II for the crimes perpetrated against them by the Japanese government. The joint resolution honors the surviving victims and extends the General Assembly’s profound hope that the historical record of the crimes against these women will serve as a lasting reminder to the world that crimes against humanity will not be condoned or tolerated.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The joint resolution does not impact State government operations or finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Background: The term “comfort women” is a euphemism used by the Japanese government to describe women forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese military between 1932 and 1945. While lack of official documentation makes it difficult to know how many “comfort women” there were, historians estimate that the number may total as many as 200,000. The majority of “comfort women” were of Korean or Chinese descent but women from Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Australia, and the Netherlands were also interned in military brothels or “comfort stations” run directly by the Imperial Japanese military or by private agents working for the military.

In 1993, Japan formally acknowledged and apologized for its military's involvement in the sexual enslavement of women. However, there have been calls for a more adequate response by the Japanese government from many different groups, including former "comfort women," academics, nonprofits, and governments across the globe. In 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives, with H. Res. 121 (110th) called on the Japanese government to formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for the sexual enslavement of "comfort women" by the Imperial Japanese military, and to educate current and future generations about the crime.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Amnesty International, Asian Women's Fund, *The Japan Times*, *Time Magazine*, U.S. Congress, Department of Legislative Services

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md/hlb

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