

Representative Garcia Statement for the Record

**Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last
word.**

**Today we are calling attention and
taking action to protect women and
children across the country. Women
and children that are often left behind
and ignored.**

**It is significant that we are passing
these three pieces of legislation
together. With these bills, we shore up
protections for Native women and girls
and clarify federal law to prohibit the
awful practice of female genital
mutilation.**

Indigenous people continue to suffer abuse and racism in our country every day, and women worst of all. Native American and Alaska Native women are more than twice as likely to experience sexual violence than other women in the United States. That is a statistic that we cannot accept.

The unique relationship between U.S and tribal governments makes it especially hard to convict these criminals. Over 80 percent of violent crimes against Native women are committed by non-Native men.

A lack of data and understanding that is rooted in generations of prejudice has led us to this crisis of violence without justice.

With Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act, we will increase coordination between all levels of law enforcement to respond to cases of missing and murdered Native women and empower tribal governments to investigate and charge these crimes. We will increase data collection and establish best practices to take these cases to justice.

This Committee must approve the legislation we are discussing today so we can start to collect data, hold perpetrators accountable, and put an end to sexual violence against Native women and girls.

Our current system is broken, and Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act can help us fix it.

Our mothers, our sisters, our daughters should be safe to go to school and to work.

Today we will also clarify the criminalization of the traumatic and harmful practice of female genital mutilation. This practice is recognized as a human rights violation by the United Nations and is illegal in at least fifty-nine (59) countries worldwide.

This practice causes women and girls physical and emotional harm that cannot be reversed. It strips them of one of their most fundamental rights. But in the United States, the law to criminalize Female Genital Mutilation has been left in limbo.

It is time to clarify that as a country, we will not allow our girls to be placed in harm's way, or to be deprived of their right to make their own choices about their own bodies.

This is a matter of integrity and equality.

I am proud of this committee's work to improve the health and safety of women and girls, though it is a shame it has taken this long.

It is vital that we end the epidemic of violent crime against women of all backgrounds and put an end to female genital mutilation.

I hope my colleagues across the aisle will join me in my support for these bills.

Thank you, I yield the remainder of my time.