



Justice for Former American Hostages in Iran Act of 2024

Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock & Senator J.D. Vance

In November 1979, the U.S. Embassy in Iran was seized by Iranian militants and 66 Americans were taken hostage. The majority of these hostages were held for 444 days in an event known as The Iranian Hostage Crisis. As part of the agreement for their release in 1981 (the Algiers Accords), these hostages were barred from filing lawsuits related to their captivity against Iran. In 2015, the United States Congress, led by late U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), recognized the inherent unfairness of this situation and subsequently created the United States Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism (USVSST) Fund, authorizing the former Iran hostages to finally receive justice and compensation from this Fund as a remedy for their horrific experience. Because the former Iran hostages had been barred from the courts for decades, Congress itself determined the appropriate compensation and set out the amount of compensation in statute, thus codifying a promise from Congress to remedy this injustice.

The USVSST Fund, administered by the U.S. Department of Justice, provides financial compensation to victims of terrorism. The Fund makes distributions to eligible claimants based upon available funding. Typically, claimants receive “pro rata” payments, meaning they receive small, equitable portions of their compensation paid over time. Congress has recognized that this payment plan does not work for every claimant within the Fund, and has previously authorized certain groups of claimants to receive lump sum and catch-up payments. The former Iran hostages, despite being the oldest and eldest claimants within the USVSST Fund, and despite being barred from receiving any compensation through the courts, have never received special lump sum or catch-up payments. In fact, to date, the former Iran hostages have only received a fraction of the payments Congress authorized them to receive under the USVSST Fund, and without more action from Congress, it will take decades for them to fully receive their promised justice. **It is time for Congress to finally keep its promise to these victims and their families.**

The Justice for Former American Hostages in Iran Act, bipartisan legislation championed by Senators Reverend Warnock and Vance, would fix this problem. Specifically, the legislation:

- Authorizes and appropriates funds to the USVSST Fund to make full and complete payments for outstanding and unpaid claims for former Iran hostages and their eligible family members.
- Mandates that any money appropriated for payments to the former Iran hostages may not be used for any other purposes.

The *Justice for Former American Hostages in Iran Act* ensures that these Americans, 43 long years after the end of the Iranian Hostage Crisis, are recognized for the hardships they endured on behalf of their country and receive the compensation they so justly deserve.

For any questions or to be added as a cosponsor, please contact Joe Gookin at Joe_Gookin@warnock.senate.gov or Ethan Whiting Ethan_Whiting@warnock.senate.gov