

The Anti-Semitism Awareness Act

Co-Introduced by U.S. Reps. Roskam, Deutch, Collins, Nadler and Sens. Scott, Casey

An Act to help the Department of Education accurately identify harassment and discrimination against Jewish students.

The Anti-Semitism Awareness Act instructs the Department of Education to take account of the leading definition of anti-Semitism—adopted by the State Department in 2010—to help determine whether potentially actionable harassing and discriminatory conduct is motivated by anti-Semitism.

Over the past several years, there has been a well-documented and sharp increase in anti-Semitism in the United States, and especially on U.S. college campuses. In the current climate, incidents of anti-Jewish harassment have become all too common, with some Jewish students even expressing discomfort at publicly identifying themselves as Jewish.

To date, an absence of clear guidance has hampered the ability of the Department of Education to address the threats, harassment, and intimidation that too many Jewish students face on college campuses.

The Anti-Semitism Awareness Act represents a significant advance in the effort to solve this problem. By incorporating the 2010 definition of anti-Semitism developed by the State Department's Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, this bill provides clear guidance and examples to authorities investigating allegations of anti-Semitic discrimination or harassment on college campuses. The bill will help the Department of Education conduct its reviews or investigations into potentially anti-Semitic acts in violation of the civil rights protections available to all Americans.

At the same time, the legislation will not change the substantive rights or obligations under existing anti-discrimination law, and is specifically designed to—and will—ensure the protection of students' and schools' First Amendment rights and academic freedom.

The Anti-Semitism Awareness Act is supported by many major Jewish organization in the country, including the Anti-Defamation League, Simon Wiesenthal Center, Jewish Federations of North America, AIPAC, and the American Jewish Committee, as well as Christians United for Israel.