

U.S. Rep. Pocan: Introduces the 21st Century President Act to clarify that women and LGBTQ Americans can be President

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Outdated legal definitions in the U.S. code should be clear: Presidents don't have to be men and their spouses don't have to be wives

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Representative Mark Pocan (WI-02) today introduced the 21st Century President Act, which would change outdated legal definitions in the U.S. code to clarify that Presidents do not have to be men and their spouses do not have to be wives.

“In 2016, one of the two major party candidates for President was a woman with a husband and in 2020, for the first time in history, we may have more presidential candidates who are women than men, as well as a potential LGBTQ candidate who is married,” **said Pocan**. “The U.S. Code should not assume that Presidents will be men or that they will only marry women, especially when describing which people will or will not be protected by federal law. While this language may have been accepted when the original law was enacted, it does not reflect the America of today and I look forward to ensuring that federal law recognizes this reality.”

Currently, 18 U.S.C. 879 makes it a criminal act to threaten to kill, kidnap, or inflict bodily harm upon the President, a former President, a candidate for President, or a member of their families, while referring to Presidents as men and to their spouses as wives. In recognition of the fact that we now live in the 21st Century, the

“21st Century President Act” seeks to amend 18 U.S.C. 879(b)(1)(A) in the following manner:

“(1) the term ‘immediate family’ means—

1. with respect to subsection (a)(1) of this section, the ~~wife~~ **spouse** of a former President during ~~his~~ **a former President’s** lifetime, the ~~widow~~ **surviving spouse** of a former President until ~~her~~ **the surviving spouse’s** death or remarriage, and minor children of a former President until they reach sixteen years of age”