

# U.S. Rep. Pocan: 21st Century President Act passes House

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**WASHINGTON, D.C.** - Today, **U.S. Congressman Mark Pocan's (WI-02)** bill, the **21st Century President Act** (H.R. 3285), passed the House unanimously by voice vote. Pocan's bill would make commonsense updates to gendered language in the U.S. Code, reflecting the reality that a woman or LGBTQ+ person will someday hold the office of the presidency. Without this change, the law that makes it a crime to threaten to kill, kidnap, or inflict bodily harm upon the President or the President's family would fail to explicitly include a future female president or president with a same-sex spouse.

"In the last presidential election, six women and one gay man entered the Democratic primary in the race to be president, but current federal law would have failed to fully protect them and their spouses if elected," **said Representative Pocan.** "We're closer than we've ever been to electing a woman, or someone with a spouse of the same sex, as president. Let's not wait until that day comes to ensure the Constitution's promise of equal protection under the law is guaranteed."

"Words have meaning, and in 2022, our laws should reflect that a President and their spouse can be any gender," **said Congressman David N. Cicilline (RI-01), Chair of the Congressional LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus.** "I was proud to vote today for the 21st Century President Act, which — by replacing certain gender-specific references in the U.S. code — makes it clear that LGBTQ+ people and women can be President. Thank you Equality Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Mark Pocan for introducing this important bill, and House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler for helping shepherd this bill through the House Judiciary Committee and through the House."

"I am thrilled that the House voted today to pass the 21st Century President

Act,” **said Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee.** “This bill takes direct action to modernize the language we use criminalizing threats against former Presidents and their families by removing gendered terms. As it stands, the statute defines immediate family with terms such as ‘wife,’ ‘her,’ and ‘widow,’ which presumes the President will always be a man married to a woman. When first enacted, Congress did not account for issues of gender equality, an area in which we have made significant, though incomplete, progress. I am proud to have helped pass this bill out of the Judiciary Committee, and I am grateful to Congressman Pocan for his tireless leadership on this issue.”

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 family, while referring to Presidents as men and to their spouses as wives. The bipartisan 21st Century President Act would replace the terms “wife” and “widow” with “spouse,” and replaces gender-specific pronouns referring to the President and presidential spouses with gender-neutral terms to extend full protection to anyone elected to become the president and first family.

Click [here](#) to read the full text of the legislation.