

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE HOUSE THAT THE NATION'S CHILDREN ARE ITS MOST VALUABLE ASSETS AND THAT THEIR PROTECTION SHOULD BE THE NATION'S HIGHEST PRIORITY

JUNE 26, 1997.—Referred to the House calendar and ordered to be printed

Mr. MCCOLLUM, from the Committee on the Judiciary,  
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. Res. 154]

The Committee on the Judiciary, to whom was referred the resolution (H. Res. 154) expressing the sense of the House that the Nation's children are its most valuable assets and that their protection should be the Nation's highest priority, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the resolution do pass.

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

The purpose of H. Res. 154 is to express Congressional commitment to the safety and protection of our Nation's children. H. Res. 154 provides that States should have in place laws which severely punish individuals convicted of offenses against children. The resolution declares that law enforcement agencies should take the necessary steps to safeguard children against the dangers of abduction and exploitation and should work in close cooperation with Federal law enforcement to ensure a rapid and efficient response to reports of child abductions, especially in cases where a child's life may be in danger.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE LEGISLATION

House Resolution 154, expresses the sense of the House regarding the safety and protection of our Nation's children. On May 25, of this year, the United States observed National Missing Children's Day, a day established by President Reagan in 1983 to raise public awareness about the need for increased child protection. House Resolution 154, prepared in connection with National Missing Children's Day, is a declaration by this Congress, that child ab-

duction is a very serious matter and that Congress intends to work with State and local law enforcement to ensure that effective and appropriate measures are in place to prevent crimes against children.

It is every parent's nightmare to find their child missing. Justice Department statistics indicate that over one million children are reported missing each year. Over 100,000 abductions of children are attempted by non-family members annually. About 750,000 children under the age of 18 disappear for some length of time every year. These statistics are even more disconcerting when coupled with the fact that nearly two-thirds of State prisoners serving time for rape and sexual assault victimized children. Almost one-third of these victims were less than 11-years-old. This resolution includes these and other statistics in its findings, in addition to providing that States should have in place laws which severely punish individuals convicted of offenses against children. This resolution declares that law enforcement agencies should take the necessary steps to safeguard children against the dangers of abduction and exploitation and should work in close cooperation with Federal law enforcement to ensure a rapid and efficient response to reports of child abductions, especially in cases where a child's life may be in danger.

In the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-322), Congress established the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act. This Act provided guidelines for the States to set up sex offender registration programs. Since enactment of this law, all 50 States and the District of Columbia have established sex offender registration programs. When investigating child abduction cases, law enforcement must act quickly if there is to be any hope of returning a child safely to his or her home. Sex offender registries serve as an invaluable law enforcement tool by providing quick access to computerized information on individuals who have committed sexual crimes against children and are living nearby.

Two years after passage of the Jacob Wetterling Act, Congress passed Megan's Law (P.L. 104-145) and the National Sexual Offender Tracking and Identification Act (P.L. 104-236) into law—two bills which strengthened community notification laws with regard to registered sex offenders and provided law enforcement with the tools to keep track of sex offenders who move from State to State. At least 40 States have established some form of community notification programs which inform communities when sex offenders move into their neighborhoods. This resolution re-emphasizes Congress' support of the States which have set up sex offender registration and notification programs, in addition to encouraging the remaining States to establish such programs.

Finally, Congress urges state and local law enforcement to work in close cooperation with Federal law enforcement to ensure a rapid and efficient response to reports of child abductions, especially in cases where the child's life may be in danger. State and local law enforcement should, without delay, report suspicious missing children's cases to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) which immediately alerts the FBI's Child Abduction Serial Killer Unit (CASKU) and the National Center for Missing and Ex-

ploited Children (NCMEC). This alert allows CASKU and NCMEC to offer assistance as needed. In addition, state and local law enforcement should utilize the Jimmy Ryce Training Center, a training and technical assistance program authorized by Congress in the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-537). This program offers multi-tiered training for State and local law enforcement and promotes awareness of and encourages the use of existing federal resources to assist law enforcement agencies investigate missing children's cases.

#### HEARINGS

No hearings were held on H. Res. 154.

#### COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

On June 12, 1997, the Subcommittee on Crime met in open session and ordered reported the resolution H. Res. 154 by a voice vote, a quorum being present. On June 18, 1997, the Committee met in open session and ordered reported favorably the resolution H. Res. 154 without amendment by voice vote, a quorum being present.

#### VOTE OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no recorded votes.

#### COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS

In compliance with clause 2(1)(3)(A) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee reports that the findings and recommendations of the Committee, based on oversight activities under clause 2(b)(1) of rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives, are incorporated in the descriptive portions of this report.

#### COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT FINDINGS

No findings or recommendations of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight were received as referred to in clause 2(1)(3)(D) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

#### NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY AND TAX EXPENDITURES

Clause 2(1)(3)(B) of House rule XI is inapplicable because this legislation does not provide new budgetary authority or increased tax expenditures.

#### COMMITTEE COST ESTIMATE

In compliance with clause 7(a) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee believes that the resolution will have no significant effect on the federal budget.

#### ANALYSIS

House Resolution 154, introduced by Mr. Collins from Georgia, expresses the sense of the House regarding the safety and protection of our Nation's children. H. Res 154 provides that: (1) all Members of Congress should take appropriate action to ensure the safe-

ty and protection of children in their jurisdictions; (2) State governments should have in effect laws which register offenders convicted of sexual crimes against children and laws which require law enforcement to notify communities of the presence of these offenders; (3) States should have in effect laws which severely punish individuals convicted of offenses against children, especially crimes involving abduction, sexual assault, exploitation, and stalking; (4) law enforcement agencies should take the necessary steps to safeguard children against the dangers of abduction and exploitation; and (5) State and local law enforcement agencies should work in close cooperation with Federal law enforcement to ensure a rapid and efficient response to reports of child abductions, especially in cases where a child's life may be in danger.

#### AGENCY VIEWS

The Committee did not receive agency views on H. Res. 154.

#### CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW MADE BY THE RESOLUTION, AS REPORTED

If enacted, H. Res. 154 would make no changes in existing law.

