

Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act

H.R. 4980, the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, became law on September 29, 2014. The legislation was passed on a bipartisan basis and is aimed at reducing child sex trafficking, increasing adoptions and improving child support collections.

The bill was introduced in the House by Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI), Ranking Member Sander Levin (D-MI), Human Resources Subcommittee Chairman Dave Reichert (R-WA), and Ranking Member Lloyd Doggett (D-TX).

The Act will encourage states to combat sex trafficking among youth in foster care, promote normalcy for foster youth, help move more children from foster care into adoptive homes or the homes of relatives, and increase the amount of child support provided to families in which one parent resides outside of the U.S. The legislation is fully paid for, and is expected to reduce the deficit by \$19 million over the next 10 years.

The following are key provisions of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act:

- **Title I: Protecting Youth at Risk of Sex Trafficking.** Requires state child welfare agencies to identify, document, and determine appropriate services for children in foster care or who are otherwise involved in the child welfare system who are victims of child sex trafficking or at risk of becoming victims.
- Requires state child welfare agencies to promote "normalcy" for youth in foster care allowing them to more easily participate in age appropriate social, scholastic and enrichment activities.
- **Title II: Improving Adoption Incentives.** Improves the adoption incentives program and extends it for three years. It also extends the Family Connection Grant Program for one year.
- **Title III: Improving International Child Support Recovery.** Requires states to make necessary changes to implement the Hague Convention in enforcing international child support cases, increasing the amount of child support collected for families.
- Requires data standardization within the child support enforcement program, improving administration. This would streamline the child support programs with federal programs including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child welfare, Unemployment Insurance and food assistance programs such as SNAP.
- Requires all states to implement electronic processing of income withholding, as most states already do; this will improve the collection of child support and save taxpayers \$48 million over 10 years.
- Creates a task force to explore ways to improve the effectiveness of the child support enforcement program.