

Currently in the US, there are over 100,000 cases of child abuse, abduction, or exploitation, each year. It is imperative that we do not allow this number to escalate out of carelessness. Why should we allow an extra Amber Alert to occur when it would be so easy to prevent?

The Amber Alert Network which was first implemented in the State of Texas is an important element in attaining a truly secure environment. This system is part of an additional level of protection. Yet, programs like Amber Alert lose their significance when they are not accompanied by meaningful precautions. The background checks that the "Criminal History Background Checks Pilot Extension Act of 2008" makes possible, allow us to stop Amber Alerts before they happen.

I have always seen the safety of children as an issue of tremendous importance. Whether it is through this bill, protecting children from sex-offenders, or in recent legislation such as H.R. 3397, safeguarding children against lead-poisoning, or in other acts improving school safety, I believe that the well-being of our children must be one of our foremost concerns.

I urge my colleagues to support this act to protect the children of Texas' 18th and the children of our Nation.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 3218.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

A CHILD IS MISSING ALERT AND RECOVERY CENTER ACT

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5464) to direct the Attorney General to make an annual grant to the A Child Is Missing Alert and Recovery Center to assist law enforcement agencies in the rapid recovery of missing children, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5464

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "A Child Is Missing Alert and Recovery Center Act".

SEC. 2. DIRECTING THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO MAKE ANNUAL GRANTS TO A CHILD IS MISSING ALERT AND RECOVERY CENTER TO ASSIST LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN RECOVERING MISSING CHILDREN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General, acting through the Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, shall annually make a grant to the A Child Is Missing Alert and Recovery Center.

(b) SPECIFIED USE OF FUNDS FOR RECOVERY ACTIVITIES, REGIONAL CENTERS, EDUCATION, AND INFORMATION SHARING.—A Child Is Missing Alert and Recovery Center shall use the funds made available under this Act—

(1) to operate and expand the A Child Is Missing Alert and Recovery Center to provide services to Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies to promote the quick recovery of a missing child in response to a request from such agencies for assistance by utilizing rapid alert telephone calls, text messaging, and satellite mapping technology;

(2) to maintain and expand technologies and techniques to ensure the highest level of performance of such services;

(3) to establish and maintain regional centers to provide both centralized and on-site training and to distribute information to Federal, State, and local law enforcement agency officials about how to best utilize the services provided by the A Child Is Missing Alert and Recovery Center;

(4) to share appropriate information with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the AMBER Alert Coordinator, and appropriate Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies; and

(5) to assist the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the AMBER Alert Coordinator, and appropriate Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies with education programs.

SEC. 3. DEFINITION OF MISSING CHILD.

For purposes of this Act, the term "missing child" means an individual whose whereabouts are unknown to a Federal, State, or local law enforcement agency.

SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

For grants under section 2, there are authorized to be appropriated to the Attorney General \$5,000,000 for each fiscal year from fiscal year 2009 through fiscal year 2014.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have an additional 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5464, the "A Child Is Missing Alert and Recovery Center Act," helps address the terrifying experience of when a family member or friend goes missing.

Under current law, there are programs such as Amber Alert to help missing children who are abducted or become victims of foul play. But these programs do not extend to situations where a child or elderly person becomes missing in other more innocent ways. H.R. 5464 fills this gap and authorizes money for annual grants to the A Child Is Missing Alert and Recovery Center. This national nonprofit program provides assistance to local law enforcement throughout the country in all situations of missing persons, not only those involved in criminal activity.

The center helps when a small child fails to come home from school or a

grandmother suffering from Alzheimer's disease walks out of her home in the middle of the night. When the terrifying event of a missing person is reported to the police, the responding police officer can call the center, which operates 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. Based on information from the call, the center quickly prepares a recorded message that includes a description of the missing person, along with a location where the person was last seen. Within minutes, the center sends this recording to thousands of phones within a radius of the last known location. This activity can save not only precious lives, but also critically needed enforcement resources that would otherwise be spent in extended searches for missing persons.

The bill before us today will make a significant contribution to the protection of children and vulnerable adults throughout the United States. I want to thank the sponsor of this bill, Ron Klein of Florida, for his leadership on this very important issue. I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5464, a bill that would authorize the A Child Is Missing Program for the next 5 years.

I would like to thank the distinguished gentleman from Florida (Mr. KLEIN) for his work on this important bill.

The A Child Is Missing Program is an unsung tool that our law enforcement and communities have been using since 1997 to locate missing children and also elderly that are missing due to Alzheimer's or other difficulties.

I would also like to recognize the founder of this program that was founded back in January 1997. I had the opportunity to meet with her in Cincinnati, the Greater Cincinnati area, Norwood, in particular, Sherry Friedlander, who is in the gallery today. And if she could stand, I would like to acknowledge her.

Statistics released by the Center for Missing and Exploited Children reveal that more than 2,000 children go missing each day in this country. Let me repeat that, 2,000 children go missing every day in this country.

□ 1700

We know that the first couple of hours a child is missing are critical to the successful recovery of that child. While the AMBER Alert is a critical tool, it takes hours to initiate. The A Child Is Missing program fills that void, alerting and mobilizing the community almost immediately. The A Child Is Missing program has been credited with over 300 safe-assisted recoveries and is supported by law enforcement organizations all over the country. In my own district, the First District of Ohio, local law enforcement agencies have directly benefited from

the program. In fact, just this past May, we highlighted the program's success in the city of Norwood, as I mentioned before, Norwood, Ohio.

H.R. 5464 will ensure that the program has the resources it needs over the next 5 years to continue serving communities like Norwood, Ohio, and communities all over the country. I urge my colleagues to support this critical program by passing H.R. 5464.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from references to occupants of the gallery.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KLEIN).

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the lead sponsor of H.R. 5464 to urge my colleagues to vote in support of the A Child is Missing Alert and Recovery Center Act. And before I begin, I would like to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) and the gentleman from Ohio, as he supported the bill in committee as well; as well as Mr. CONYERS of Michigan, the Chair of our Judiciary Committee; and the Chair of the Crime Subcommittee, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, for their extraordinary leadership and support in moving this bill out of their committees and on to the floor. And also I would like to acknowledge and thank the ranking members, Mr. SMITH and Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. GOHMERT was especially supportive during the hearing on the legislation in the Crime Subcommittee, and I would personally like to thank him for his remarks and support.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5464 would expand the widely praised A Child is Missing nonprofit organization into a national program with regional centers under the Department of Justice. The authorized funds would allow for the purchase of future technologies and techniques, centralized and on-site training, and for the distribution of information to Federal, State, and local law enforcement agency officials on the best ways to utilize the round-the-clock services provided by the A Child is Missing Alert and Recovery Center.

Currently, A Child is Missing is the only program of its kind that assists in all missing cases involving abduction, children who are lost, wander, or run away; and adults with special needs such as the elderly who suffer with Alzheimer's, which is a concern in my district in south Florida.

When a person is reported missing to the police, A Child is Missing utilizes the latest technology to place 1,000 emergency telephone calls every 60 seconds to residents and businesses in the area where the person was last seen. It works in concert with the existing AMBER Alert system and all other child safety programs and has the support of law enforcement agencies all across our country.

A Child is Missing also fills a critical gap in time in the most dangerous cases. Although the AMBER Alert has been an extremely successful program, there is still a crucial void of 3 to 5 hours in many cases from when a child is first reported missing and when an AMBER Alert shows up on our highways or is announced, which is only activated when cases of criminal abduction have been issued. This critical period of time can be the difference between whether a child lives or dies. Recently, a Washington State Attorney General's office study showed that among cases involving children abducted and murdered, 74 percent were slain in the first 3 hours. This only highlights the importance of this time element. Adding to this problem is the resource and manpower limitations facing many local law enforcement agencies. Roughly half of these officers in the United States have 25 or fewer officers, and an average 12-hour search for a missing child can cost up to \$400,000.

A Child is Missing helps to fill this critical gap in time as well as complement the AMBER Alert during the ongoing search. We know this for a fact because we have heard it from countless law enforcement officers from all over the United States.

So the issue isn't whether A Child is Missing works or not. The real issue is that not enough local communities have access to the program. The founder and president of A Child is Missing, Sherry Friedlander from my home community of Ft. Lauderdale, has done an exceptional job in creating and spreading this program not only in our community but throughout all 50 States. But if we are going to bring the program to every community in all these States, then we will need to leverage the resources of the Federal Government, and that's exactly what this legislation does.

H.R. 5464 has broad bipartisan support in Congress. We have cosponsors from all across the country including Ohio, Kentucky, Texas, Indiana, and New York. In the Senate companion legislation was introduced by Senator MENENDEZ and is cosponsored by Senator HATCH, the distinguished former chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. We have such support because A Child is Missing provides a service that transcends politics. Our children are not Democrats or Republicans. They are our children, and they are all of our responsibility, and their protection requires us to work together to do what's best for their continued safety.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues today to support H.R. 5464.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, for your leadership in bringing this very important bill to the floor. I support this bill and urge my colleagues to do the same. This bill is good and it is necessary.

The bill is sponsored by Mr. KLEIN and has bi-partisan support. It has 21 cosponsors, including the following Judiciary members: Chairman CONYERS, Chairman SCOTT, Mr.

CHABOT, Mr. NADLER, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. COHEN, Mr. JOHNSON, Ms. SUTTON, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

A child goes missing every 40 seconds. The successful recovery of missing children often requires a quick response. In 1997, Sherry Friedlander, the founder of A Child is Missing (ACIM), saw the need for a rapid-response program to persons who go missing, especially in situations that do not involve abductions. In response to this need, she established ACIM, a national non-profit organization that offers free assistance to law enforcement 365 days of the year, 24 hours per day. The program is not limited to children, but extends to elderly persons (suffering from senility or Alzheimer's), mentally challenged or disabled individuals and college students.

When law enforcement receives a call regarding a missing person, the first-responder can immediately call ACIM for help. The officer provides critical information to ACIM, such as the person's age and description and the last time/place seen. ACIM uses that information to record a message that, within minutes, is sent via phone to 1000s of locations within a radius of the last sighting of the person. Through their computer mapping system, ACIM also can identify "hot spots," such as water or wooded areas.

ACIM complements the Amber Alert program by providing different services. While Amber Alert focuses on children who are abducted, ACIM covers all "persons" who go missing, including situations where criminal intent may not be at issue. Amber Alert uses television and highway signs to broadcast information about the abducted child and the related vehicle, while ACIM uses a rapid response telephone alert system and covers cases where there is no vehicle involved. The ACIM notification system often can respond more quickly than the Amber Alert program.

ACIM would use the requested money to operate and expand the existing ACIM office in Florida, to develop Regional Centers for on-site training and communication with local law enforcement, to maintain and expand their computer and phone technologies, and to assist the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the AMBER Alert Coordinator, and appropriate law enforcement agencies with training.

H.R. 5464 authorizes \$5 million annual grants for 2009 through 2014 to A Child is Missing Alert and Recovery Center (ACIM) to assist law enforcement in the rapid recovery of missing children and other individuals.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses and look forward to their testimony. I hope that we can ensure the health and safety of the young and the elderly—two vulnerable populations—whose rights I have long championed.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5464.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 231) to authorize the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program at fiscal year 2006 levels through 2012.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The text of the Senate bill is as follows:

S. 231

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. AUTHORIZATION OF GRANTS.

Section 508 of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3758) is amended by striking “for fiscal year 2006” through the period and inserting “for each of the fiscal years 2006 through 2012.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant, or Byrne/JAG Program, is named after Edward Byrne, a New York City police officer killed by a violent drug gang 20 years ago.

The Byrne/JAG Program is the only source of Federal funding for multi-jurisdictional efforts to prevent and fight crime. The funding is used by States and local governments to support a broad range of activities to prevent and control crime and to improve the criminal justice system.

Specific uses include law enforcement, prosecution, and court programs; crime prevention and education programs; community-based programs; drug treatment, planning, and evaluation efforts; and crime victim and witness programs.

Simply put, this program enables States to employ all aspects of fighting crime, rather than simply using the so-called “get tough” approach limited to making more arrests and making sentences longer.

Nationwide, the program has resulted in major innovations in crime control, including drug courts, gang prevention strategies, and prisoner reentry pro-

grams, all of which provide proven and highly effective crime prevention.

In turn, these innovations demonstrate that the best crime policy incorporates programs that help at-risk youth avoid criminal behavior and that prepare prisoners for reentry into society so they have meaningful and productive alternatives to crime when they return home.

S. 231 would simply reauthorize the Byrne/JAG Program at its current funding level, which is \$1.095 billion, through 2012. The House passed substantially identical legislation by voice vote last month. Passing the Senate version will enable us to send this important bill to the President.

I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of S. 231, a bill to reauthorize the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program through fiscal year 2012.

This bill continues to fund the Department of Justice Byrne/JAG Grant Program at the fiscal year 2006 level. The House passed companion legislation, H.R. 3546, just a few weeks ago.

The Byrne/JAG Program provides assistance to State and local law enforcement officials. These grants support a wide range of law enforcement activities to prevent and control crime and improve the criminal justice system. Byrne/JAG grants may be used to help pay for personnel, overtime, or equipment. Funds are also used for statewide initiatives, technical assistance, and training.

In June the FBI released its 2007 Unified Crime Report detailing the statistics for violent crime nationwide. The rate for violent crimes, including robbery, sexual assault, and murder, decreased nationally. However, the report also showed that the rate of violent crime increased in some communities across the country.

Our Nation's law enforcement officials are dedicated to preventing crime and keeping our communities safe, and their efforts should be applauded. Congress plays an important role in supporting State and local law enforcement officials by continuing to reauthorize programs like this at appropriate levels.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of reauthorization of the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program. As a cosponsor of the House version of this bill, I am pleased that this legislation will reauthorize a program that is vital not only to my District, but to Iowa, and States across the country.

Byrne JAG is one of our country's most effective law enforcement tools. It is the only source of federal funding for multi-jurisdictional efforts to prevent, fight, and prosecute drug-related and violent crime. The program funds drug treatment; keeps our communities safe

by increasing the number of officers on the street; and gives local law enforcement officers the tools they need to shut down the production and distribution of illegal drugs.

With the help of Byrne JAG funding, State and local law enforcement officers across the country have made tremendous strides in combating illegal drugs. A recent study found that Byrne JAG funded programs have led to 220,000 arrests, the seizure of 54,000 weapons; the destruction of 5.5 million grams of methamphetamine, and the elimination of almost 9,000 methamphetamine labs.

In Iowa, reported methamphetamine labs have dropped 90 percent since their peak in 2004. Meanwhile, meth treatment admissions have increased and Iowa now has the third highest rate of meth treatment in the country. Child abuse due to meth labs is in decline, and three recent Iowa Youth Surveys have shown steady decline in substance use among 6th, 8th, and 11th grade students.

What these statistics make clear is that Byrne JAG is proven, effective, and critical to public safety. This reauthorization lays the groundwork for robust funding for Byrne JAG through 2012, and I urge my colleagues to not only support adoption of the bill but to also support full funding for the program in this and coming years.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 231 to reauthorize the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant, Byrne-JAG, Program at fiscal year 2006 levels through 2012. The Byrne-JAG monies are supposed to be used to make America a safer place. I support the reauthorization, and I would urge my colleagues to do likewise.

WHY BYRNE-JAG IS NECESSARY

Byrne-JAG allows States and local governments to support a broad range of activities to prevent and control crime and to improve the criminal justice system, which States and local governments have come to rely on to ensure public safety. They support: law enforcement, prosecution and court programs, prevention and education, corrections and community programs, drug treatment, planning, evaluation, technology improvement programs, and crime victim and witness programs, other than compensation. In short, they are an indispensable resource that States use to combat crime.

RECENT CUTS IN BYRNE JAG FUNDING

Unfortunately, in fiscal year 2008 the Byrne-JAG program was cut by two-thirds. Although Congress authorized over \$1 billion, only \$520 million were appropriated for fiscal year 2007. The appropriation was then drastically reduced to \$170.4 million in fiscal year 2008, and the President has proposed further cuts for the fiscal year 2009 budget.

PAST PROBLEMS WITH BYRNE JAG

The trend to reduce the grant funding may result, in part, from instances where Byrne-JAG funding has been abused. For example, in 1999 Byrne-JAG funding was used in the infamous Tulia outrage in which a rogue police narcotics officer in Texas set up dozens of people, most of them African-American, in false cocaine trafficking charges. In other instances, jurisdictions used the funding to fund task forces focused solely on ineffective, low-level drug arrests, which has put the task force concept and the diminished standards of drug enforcement that it has come to represent—in the national spotlight.