

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman LEWIS for his work on this important legislation. I also thank the ranking member, Mr. SCOTT, whom I had the pleasure of working with on this same cause last year. This year, of course, I am proud to be a cosponsor of this bill.

As a former member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, this was and remains one of my priorities, as I believe that this reauthorization can help us achieve our antipoverty goals here in the U.S. House.

The Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017 will help set kids up for success that is long term, so they are not caught up in a system that puts them on a path where failure is inevitable. This bill includes reforms that will help juveniles transition out of the system through community-based services and education.

It also ensures that stakeholders can offer their expertise in order to best serve this population while also supporting prevention services to keep kids on the right track. Another important thing to note is that this bill prioritizes evidence-based strategies to reduce juvenile delinquency, directing necessary resources to what actually works.

Everyone deserves the chance to improve their circumstances. Many kids who end up in the juvenile justice system are the most vulnerable in our communities. These kids and the stakeholders and policymakers who support them need the flexibility and tools to effectively serve them. I believe this legislation is a step in the right direction, and I encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favor of it.

I appreciate the work that the Committee on Education and the Workforce has done to help at-risk youth get on a path to a brighter future.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank, again, the gentleman from Minnesota for his leadership. I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

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

Mr. LEWIS of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Ensuring kids experiencing difficult life circumstances avoid a life of crime is a collaborative effort. I find it a privilege to stand with parents, teachers, and law enforcement officers to ensure at-risk youth are able to get back on track and grow into productive members of society.

The Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017 makes commonsense reforms that move us in a positive direction by providing support to kids who need help the most. I am pleased to help lead this bipartisan effort.

I thank my colleague, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) for the work he has done on this legislation.

By working together here in Congress, we can ensure young people have the opportunities they need to turn

their lives around and earn a lifetime of success. I thank my colleagues for their support of H.R. 1809.

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 Minnesota (Mr. LEWIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1809, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN ACT OF 2017

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1808) to amend and improve the Missing Children's Assistance Act, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1808

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 "Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act of 2017".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Section 402 of the Missing Children's Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5771) is amended—

(1) by amending paragraph (1) to read as follows:

"(1) each year tens of thousands of children run away, or are abducted or removed, from the control of a parent having legal custody without such parent's consent, under circumstances which immediately place the child in grave danger;"

(2) by striking paragraphs (4) and (5).

(3) in paragraph (6) by inserting "including child sex trafficking and sextortion" after "exploitation";

(4) in paragraph (8) by adding "and" at the end,

(5) by striking paragraph (9).

(6) by amending paragraph (10) to read as follows:

"(10) a key component of such programs is the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that—

"(A) serves as a nonprofit, national resource center and clearinghouse to provide assistance to victims, families, child-serving professionals, and the general public;

"(B) works with the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Marshals Service, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of State, the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the United States Secret Service, the United States Postal Inspection Service, other agencies, and nongovernmental organizations in the effort to find missing children and to prevent child victimization; and

"(C) coordinates with each of the missing children clearinghouses operated by the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and international organizations to transmit images and information regarding missing and exploited children to law enforcement, nongovernmental organizations, and corporate partners across the United States and around the world instantly." and

(7) by redesignating paragraphs (6), (7), (8), and (10) as paragraphs (4), (5), (6), and (7), respectively.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

Section 403 of the Missing Children's Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5772) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking "legal custodian" each place it appears and inserting "parent";

(B) in subparagraph (A) by striking "custodian's" and inserting "parent's"; and

(C) in subparagraph (C) by striking the period and the end and inserting a semicolon,

(2) in paragraph (2) by striking "and" at the end,

(3) in paragraph (3) by striking the period at the end and inserting "; and", and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

"(4) the term 'parent' includes a legal guardian or other individual standing in loco parentis (such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child's welfare)."

SEC. 4. DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATOR.

Section 404 of the Missing Children's Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5773) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (3) by striking "telephone line" and inserting "hotline"; and

(B) in paragraph (6)(E)—

(i) by striking "telephone line" and inserting "hotline";

(ii) by striking "(b)(1)(A) and" and inserting "(b)(1)(A)," and

(iii) by inserting "and the number and types of reports to the tipline established under subsection (b)(1)(K)(i)" before the semicolon at the end,

(2) in subsection (b)(1)—

(A) in subparagraph (A)—

(i) by striking "telephone line" each place it appears and inserting "hotline"; and

(ii) by striking "legal custodian" and inserting "parent";

(B) in subparagraph (C)—

(i) in clause (i)—

(I) by striking "restaurant" and inserting "food"; and

(II) by striking "and" at the end,

(ii) in clause (ii) by adding "and" at the end, and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

"(iii) innovative and model programs, services, and legislation that benefit missing and exploited children;"

(C) by striking subparagraphs (E), (F), and (G),

(D) by amending subparagraph (H) to read as follows:

"(H) provide technical assistance and training to families, law enforcement agencies, State and local governments, elements of the criminal justice system, nongovernmental agencies, local educational agencies, and the general public—

"(i) in the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment of cases involving missing and exploited children;

"(ii) to respond to foster children missing from the State child welfare system in coordination with child welfare agencies and courts handling juvenile justice and dependency matters; and

"(iii) in the identification, location, and recovery of victims of, and children at risk for, child sex trafficking;"

(E) by amending subparagraphs (I), (J), and (K) to read as follows:

"(I) provide assistance to families, law enforcement agencies, State and local governments, nongovernmental agencies, child-serving professionals, and other individuals involved in the location and recovery of missing and abducted children, both nationally, and in cooperation with the Department of State, internationally;

"(J) provide support and technical assistance to child-serving professionals involved in helping to recover missing and exploited children by

searching public records databases to help in the identification, location, and recovery of such children, and help in the location and identification of potential abductors and offenders;

“(K) provide forensic and direct on-site technical assistance and consultation to families, law enforcement agencies, child-serving professionals, and nongovernmental organizations in child abduction and exploitation cases, including facial reconstruction of skeletal remains and similar techniques to assist in the identification of unidentified deceased children;”

(F) by striking subparagraphs (L) and (M),

(G) by amending subparagraph (N) to read as follows:

“(N) provide training, technical assistance, and information to nongovernmental organizations relating to non-compliant sex offenders and to law enforcement agencies in identifying and locating such individuals;”

(H) by striking subparagraph (P),

(I) by amending subparagraph (Q) to read as follows:

“(Q) work with families, law enforcement agencies, electronic service providers, electronic payment service providers, technology companies, nongovernmental organizations, and others on methods to reduce the existence and distribution of online images and videos of sexually exploited children—

“(i) by operating a tipline to provide to individuals and electronic service providers an effective means of reporting Internet-related and other instances of child sexual exploitation in the areas of—

“(I) possession, manufacture, and distribution of child pornography;

“(II) online enticement of children for sexual acts;

“(III) child sex trafficking;

“(IV) sex tourism involving children;

“(V) extra familial child sexual molestation;

“(VI) unsolicited obscene material sent to a child;

“(VII) misleading domain names; and

“(VIII) misleading words or digital images on the Internet;

and subsequently to make such reports available to the appropriate law enforcement agency for its review and potential investigation;

“(ii) by operating a child victim identification program to assist law enforcement agencies in identifying victims of child pornography and other sexual crimes to support the recovery of children from sexually exploitative situations; and

“(iii) by utilizing emerging technologies to provide additional outreach and educational materials to parents and families;”

(J) by striking subparagraph (R),

(K) by amending subparagraphs (S) and (T) to read as follows:

“(S) develop and disseminate programs and information to families, child-serving professionals, law enforcement agencies, State and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, schools, local educational agencies, child-serving organizations, and the general public on—

“(i) the prevention of child abduction and sexual exploitation;

“(ii) Internet safety, including tips for social media and cyberbullying; and

“(iii) sexting and sextortion; and

“(T) provide technical assistance and training to local educational agencies, schools, State and local law enforcement agencies, individuals, and other nongovernmental organizations that assist with finding missing and abducted children in identifying and recovering such children.”

(L) by redesignating subparagraphs (H), (I), (J), (K), (N), (O), (Q), (S), (T), (U), and (V) as subparagraphs (E) through (O), respectively.

SEC. 5. GRANTS.

Section 405 of the Missing Children's Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5775) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (7) by striking “(as defined in section 403(1)(A))”, and

(B) in paragraph (8)—

(i) by striking “legal custodians” and inserting “parents”, and

(ii) by striking “custodians” and inserting “parents”, and

(2) in subsection (b)(1)(A) by striking “legal custodians” and inserting “parents”.

SEC. 6. REPORTING.

The Missing Children's Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5771 et seq.) is amended—

(1) by redesignating sections 407 and 408 as section 408 and 409, respectively, and

(2) by inserting after section 406 the following:

“SEC. 407. REPORTING.

“(a) REQUIRED REPORTING.—As a condition of receiving funds under section 404(b), the grant recipient shall, based solely on reports received by the grantee and not involving any data collection by the grantee other than those reports, annually provide to the Administrator and make available to the general public, as appropriate—

“(1) the number of children nationwide who are reported to the grantee as missing;

“(2) the number of children nationwide who are reported to the grantee as victims of non-family abductions;

“(3) the number of children nationwide who are reported to the grantee as victims of family abductions; and

“(4) the number of missing children recovered nationwide whose recovery was reported to the grantee.

“(b) INCIDENCE OF ATTEMPTED CHILD ABDUCTIONS.—As a condition of receiving funds under section 404(b), the grant recipient shall—

“(1) track the incidence of attempted child abductions in order to identify links and patterns;

“(2) provide such information to law enforcement agencies; and

“(3) make such information available to the general public, as appropriate.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. GUTHRIE) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1808.

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

There was no objection.

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

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1808, the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, as a father, I cannot imagine the horror moms and dads in this country experience when they discover one of their children has been taken, abused, or exploited. Sadly, that is a nightmare for hundreds of thousands of parents in this country. Last year alone, there were more than 465,000 reports of missing children, and those are just the cases that were reported.

The well-being of America's children has long been a national priority. In 1984, Congress established the Missing and Exploited Children's Program to help coordinate State and local efforts

to recover children who are missing and better protect and support kids who are victims of abuse and exploitation. As part of that program, we provide a grant that is used to support the work of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, known as NCMEC.

For more than 30 years, NCMEC has worked to provide help to people across the country, partnering with parents, law enforcement, nonprofits, and other public and private entities in an effort to recover, protect, and support missing and exploited children and their families. We are here today to ensure this supportive work continues.

H.R. 1808 updates and streamlines the Missing Children's Assistance Act, making positive changes that will enable us to strengthen our efforts. This includes reforms that encourage and increase public awareness of new and innovative ways to recover and protect missing and exploited children.

The bill better protects the growing number of children who go missing from State care or are victims of sex trafficking, while also providing transparency surrounding recovery and prevention efforts. In recent years, some of the advances in technology have, unfortunately, made it easier for kids to be victimized and exploited. H.R. 1808 ensures the law aimed at recovering and protecting exploited children is able to effectively identify and locate today's abductors and criminal offenders, many of whom are turning to more modern techniques to commit their disturbing crimes.

The Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act of 2017 delivers important reforms that will provide the tools needed to effectively serve vulnerable youth, help bring perpetrators to justice, and ensure taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1808.

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

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

I rise in strong support of H.R. 1808 to amend and improve the Missing Children's Assistance Act.

Mr. Speaker, again, it is an honor to stand with my friend, Mr. GUTHRIE, in bipartisan support of this legislation which, again, makes some important changes to the existing law for the Center for Missing & Exploited Children, as my friend said, a program which was created in 1984. Sadly, it has not finished its mission.

Again, the FBI reports every year there are about 460,000 reports of missing children, and despite the best efforts of programs which NCMEC has operated over the many years, which include hotlines and public information campaigns, again, this is still a scourge which afflicts many families all across the country in Republican, Democratic, rural, suburban, and urban areas.

Again, this bill will basically update and modernize the language of the act

to recognize that there are new forms of threats and risks to minor children, such as human trafficking and online predators.

□ 1415

So it does three essential things:

Number one, it incorporates new terminology to align the law with these new threats, which I mentioned above, and strengthens protections for children at risk.

Number two, it clarifies that NCMEC is a nonprofit entity, which is an issue that has been ensnared in the courts. And, again, Congress' passage and enactment of this bill will clarify this critical issue.

And, lastly, it clarifies that NCMEC is a resource that provides technical assistance not just to law enforcement, but to families, community groups, schools, and the public at large.

Mr. Speaker, this last aspect of the bill is critically important. Last year, Congress passed Public Law 114-184, which President Obama signed into law, the Recovering Missing Children's Act. It was a measure which I cosponsored with Mr. PAULSEN from Minnesota.

This bill actually gave State and local police another tool in terms of recovering missing children. Incredibly, the Tax Code prevented State and local law enforcement from getting access to tax returns from adults who actually had abducted children.

So, incredibly, those adults were claiming these children, who were in their illegal custody, as a tax credit and a tax exemption, but State and local officials were barred by privacy provisions in the IRS code from actually accessing that information. So, on the one hand, you had one arm of government out looking for children and you had another arm of government who knew exactly where they were based on the tax returns which were filed.

Again, NCMEC is in the process of trying to disseminate this new tool, which an audit of the IRS demonstrated that there are roughly 2,000 tax returns a year where adult individuals are actually claiming children as a tax deduction, obviously, with their residence and identity included.

So, again, that is just another example of why we need to update and modernize the law.

I would just indicate on a personal level, my wife, Audrey, is a pediatric nurse practitioner. She works at the Children's Medical Center in Hartford, Connecticut. She is involved in a specialty clinic that helps children of sex abuse and human trafficking. She said that NCMEC is a frequent flier in their office. In the really important work that she and her colleagues do, they constantly use NCMEC as a way of trying to assist law enforcement in terms of helping children who are in these situations of human trafficking and who have been victims of online use of images, which is about as low a de-

praved activity that is out there right now. So, again, the work of this center, I can attest to from a personal level, is extremely important.

This legislation will update, modernize, and give tools to make sure that all of the good guys out there—the local State police and the folks in the healthcare sector—can really do everything they can to help families in this really terrible, horrific situation.

So, again, I applaud my colleague from Kentucky for his great work, as well as Chairwoman FOXX and Ranking Member SCOTT for bringing this legislation forward. It passed unanimously in committee.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge all of my colleagues in the House to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I echo my support, and I enjoy working with my friend, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY).

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the opportunity to speak on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1808, the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act of 2017.

For more than 30 years, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, or NCMEC, has operated a unique public-private partnership in order to build a national response to crimes affecting those we cherish most: our children.

I am grateful that the bill maintains language that I supported, which grants NCMEC the authority to provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies and first responders in identifying and recovering victims of child sex trafficking.

During the committee's hearing in March, we heard from NCMEC's director on how their ability to provide technical assistance has allowed them to work in tandem with law enforcement to recover numerous child sex trafficking victims.

Mr. Speaker, we all look forward to the day when no children are ever taken and abused, and this bill helps ensure NCMEC has the tools to get us one step closer to that goal.

I appreciate the bipartisan effort on this, and I urge all my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), a city which has been really challenged with this issue. I know she has been doing great work and has very powerful thoughts and arguments to make today regarding this legislation.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend for yielding me this time, and I am pleased to support this bipartisan bill, the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act.

I support it because it does exactly what its title says. It fills the gaps in our prior legislation on missing and exploited children. We need to look at such legislation very often because of what we are learning about missing and exploited children.

There are many parts of this bill I support, but I particularly support a provision that we didn't have nearly as much knowledge of during the passage of the last bill: to improve the protection of children in State care. These are often foster children or children without parents. These are the children who may be most susceptible to trafficking and other exploitation.

I certainly would appreciate the efforts of the committee in making sure that provisions of my bill that, I believe, got to you too late, are included in the final House and Senate bill because they are entirely consistent with the bill on the floor today. They come from recent experience of the District of Columbia.

The D.C. police began to do something, which I urge all of you to do, and that is to use social media to let people know when there are missing children. It unnerved residents of the District of Columbia until they recognized that the city didn't have any more missing children than any other jurisdiction. Still, I support what the District did in using social media. Still, we simply don't know enough.

My provisions would have the government collect subsets of data that it does not collect today. For example, we found in the District that there were more missing girls of color than boys. We ought to have known that from national statistics. You don't know it because there are no national statistics on the subsets of children.

My bill would collect and publish demographic characteristics that simply are not published today on race, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. If you think of those categories, you will understand why these may be the children in particular need of protection.

In addition, there is no current comprehensive count of missing children in the United States. So, we need more work on this bill. We need to break down to these subsets so that jurisdictions, like my own, will know where to focus when we are focusing on missing children.

Again, I am pleased that the District turned out not to have any more missing children than the average jurisdiction, but I am also pleased that it got a rise out of people who never would have paid attention to this issue until the police department decided to go on social media.

We want to make sure that we cover all of our children and that we do what this bill does.

What are the gaps? Where do we need to fill in?

Mr. Speaker, this is the first bill on missing children in a number of years. We must make sure no children are left behind.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE), the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and a member of the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1808, the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act, which improves the Missing Children's Assistance Act.

Mr. Speaker, this Thursday is National Missing Children's Day. I can't imagine the pain and suffering that occurs when a child goes missing. I am a proud cosponsor of this legislation, and I am proud of the Committee on Education and the Workforce for its work on this important issue.

This legislation strengthens existing efforts to help recover missing children and prevents more children from being victims of abuse and exploitation.

This bill also includes a provision to incorporate developing technologies related to the reporting of child exploitation. This provision was a result of an idea shared by a constituent of mine, Michael Reed. His wife was a victim of abuse as a child, and he has devoted his life to making sure other children have a voice and the ability to report the abuse that they are experiencing. I am committed to ensuring that Congress is working to protect these children.

Mr. Speaker, I thank both sides of the aisle on the Education and the Workforce Committee, and I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT), the ranking member of the Education and the Workforce Committee, and a strong proponent of this legislation.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1808, the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act. This bill will strengthen recovery and prevention efforts of missing and exploited children by renewing and updating support for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, or NCMEC.

The terror experienced by parents of a missing child is unfathomable. Both the child and the parents experience pain, trauma, fear, and uncertainty. This is why affected families need the full support of law enforcement, schools, businesses, and other entities that may be able to assist in locating and recovering missing or exploited children.

In 2013, Congress reauthorized the Missing Children's Assistance Act and updated the role of NCMEC. The organization was required, at that time, to coordinate with the Interagency Council on Homelessness in order to address the high number of sex trafficking victims who were homeless youth.

Now, in 2017, Congress is including several additional improvements. As

this bill heads to the Senate, I will work with my colleagues in both Chambers to improve the reporting of characteristics of children trafficked as it relates to the Office of Juvenile Justice's triennial incidence of missing children study.

Mr. Speaker, despite the best efforts of NCMEC, more than 10,000 children go missing each year, and scores of children are forced into sexual exploitation and trafficking. I am hopeful that the enactment of these initiatives will assist in the efforts to end exploitation and trafficking. I am also hopeful that Congress will empower the work of NCMEC by appropriate funding in fiscal year 2018 and above.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MITCHELL), my friend and a member of the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act.

My wife and I have six children. Our youngest is just 7 years old. We would do anything to protect them. I can't even imagine the pain of having a child go missing, or to learn that they have been hurt or abused in any manner.

Tragically, this is a reality for far too many children and too many families in America. Last year, there were more than 465,000 reports of missing children in the United States. To put that number in perspective, about 700,000 people live in Michigan's 10th Congressional District, my home.

Even one child going missing or being abused is too many. We must recognize the seriousness of this problem and we must do everything we can to protect our children.

This important bill will assist NCMEC in locating missing children and in identifying abductors. It will help prevent children from becoming the victims of exploitation online and increase awareness about how to recover missing children.

Mr. Speaker, today we come together to support America's children. I am proud to be a sponsor of this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. ADAMS), an outstanding member of the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Ms. ADAMS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding.

I proudly stand today in support of H.R. 1808, the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act.

This bipartisan legislation reflects both Democrats' and Republicans' desire to protect and care for our greatest resource: our children.

In my home State of North Carolina, the trafficking of young women has become an epidemic. There were 181 human trafficking cases reported in

North Carolina in 2016, and Charlotte was home to more of them than anywhere else.

□ 1430

That figure gave us the dishonor of being ranked among the top 10 States in the Nation in the number of trafficking reports, and that doesn't even account for those children who have not yet been identified as victims of this shameful practice.

In North Carolina, lawmakers have sponsored efforts to establish pilot programs to help victims and train law enforcement to recognize the signs of trafficking. It is time Congress does its part and passes H.R. 1808 to support States in their efforts.

This bill would improve efforts by both law enforcement and the general public to combat trafficking, and it would enhance the identification and location of missing children and their abductors.

It would protect children from being victims to online predators and keep a promise that was made 33 years ago, when Congress first passed the Missing Children's Assistance Act and we vowed to assist the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children in protecting and recovering our missing and vulnerable youth.

I am a parent, I am a grandparent, Mr. Speaker, and I am a concerned member of my community; and my district and my State have been torn apart by human trafficking.

This is an opportunity for us to come together as Americans and support an initiative that could save lives. I urge my colleagues to pass H.R. 1808 and prove that we can all put politics aside when it comes to protecting our children.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX), the distinguished chairwoman of the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr. GUTHRIE, for his great work on handling this bill today and on the bill itself.

No child should live in fear, Mr. Speaker, and yet every year hundreds of thousands of children across the country are abducted, abused, or exploited. The safety of America's children has long been a national priority. That is why I stand here today in strong support of H.R. 1808, the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act.

In 1984, Congress passed the Missing Children's Assistance Act and established a grant to enhance our country's efforts to find missing children and prevent child exploitation. For more than 30 years, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, also known as NCMEC, has used the grant to coordinate a national response to crises and crimes affecting America's most vulnerable children.

Through unique public-private partnerships, NCMEC works with families,

law enforcement, schools, community leaders, and nonprofits in its efforts to find children who are missing and protect youth who are victims of sexual exploitation.

The reforms in the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act will ensure the vital work of recovering and supporting vulnerable youth is able to continue, reuniting more families with their loved ones and helping victims receive the support they desperately need. This is a bill that delivers the reforms needed to save lives.

I am also proud to say it is a bill with strong bipartisan support. At the opening of NCMEC, former President Ronald Reagan said:

“No single sector of our Nation can solve the problem of missing and exploited children alone. But by working together, pooling our resources, and building on our strengths, we can accomplish great things.”

“Together we can turn the tide on these hateful crimes. . . .”

Together we can turn the tide. The work our colleagues, Representatives GUTHRIE and COURTNEY, have done to get this important bill to the House floor demonstrates the type of collaboration President Reagan spoke of on that day at the opening of the NCMEC. And the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act isn't the only bill we have been able to reach across the aisle on and deliver reforms that will help vulnerable youth.

Working together, we are also advancing positive bipartisan solutions in H.R. 1809, the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017. This bill aims at assisting a different kind of vulnerable youth, ensuring kids who find themselves in the juvenile justice system have an opportunity to turn their lives around and achieve success.

Every child deserves an opportunity to make a change for the better, if that child has made a mistake. By working together to develop the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017, my colleagues, Representatives LEWIS and SCOTT, have put forward a bill that will help ensure at-risk youth are afforded an opportunity to do just that.

Both of these bills renew the commitment we have made to help and protect our Nation's most vulnerable children. All of these reforms will make a real difference in the lives of countless children, young adults, parents, and families across the country. I am proud of the bipartisan work we have been able to accomplish.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. GUTHRIE. I yield the gentlewoman an additional 30 seconds.

Ms. FOXX. I want to thank Representative SCOTT, as well as Representatives LEWIS, GUTHRIE, and COURTNEY for their leadership on these issues. I urge our fellow colleagues to support the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act.

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

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PAULSEN), a good friend of mine who, in his work on the Ways and Means Committee, has been focused on and dedicated to this issue.

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his work on this on a bipartisan basis with Mr. COURTNEY.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1808, the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act. This important initiative, it builds on the bipartisan work we have already accomplished to combat sex trafficking and child exploitation.

Since its creation in 1984, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children has worked tirelessly to protect children from being exploited, to reunite missing children with their families, and to provide resources and training to our law enforcement community to help assist in this effort.

This legislation today will assist the Center in strengthening its prevention and its recovery programs. One of those programs is the CyberTipline which, since being launched in 1998, has received 12.7 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation. It is programs like this, Mr. Speaker, that go a long way to helping us save lives and put an end to sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill.

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

In summary, we have heard again a very broad-based bipartisan chorus of voices in support of this legislation. Again, like in committee, hopefully, all of us will stand together to support this really important update to making sure that families get all the help, and law enforcement get all the help, that they need to eliminate the scourge of this problem.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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

I had the opportunity to visit the Center, and the building that I got to go visit was full of men and women who show up every day, who do exceptional work dealing with the disturbing issues, and so my hat is off to them. They deal with stuff that is just unimaginable to most of us, and they do it in a way that is dignified and in a way that is well worthy of the effort that we are giving them to give more transparency and empower them to help more.

I really appreciate working with my friend, Mr. COURTNEY. H.R. 1808 is a bipartisan proposal, and I urge my colleagues to support the Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act of 2017.

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 Kentucky (Mr. GUTHRIE) that the House suspend the

rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1808, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERANS APPEALS IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2017

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2288) to amend title 38, United States Code, to reform the rights and processes relating to appeals of decisions regarding claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2288

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 “Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017”.

SEC. 2. REFORM OF RIGHTS AND PROCESSES RELATING TO APPEALS OF DECISIONS REGARDING CLAIMS FOR BENEFITS UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—Section 101 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

“(34) The term ‘agency of original jurisdiction’ means the activity which entered the original determination with regard to a claim for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.

“(35) The term ‘relevant evidence’ means evidence that tends to prove or disprove a matter in issue.

“(36) The term ‘supplemental claim’ means any claim for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary filed by a claimant who had previously filed a claim for the same or similar benefits on the same or similar basis.”.

(b) NOTICE REGARDING CLAIMS.—Section 5103(a) of such title is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), in the first sentence, by striking “The” and inserting “Except as provided in paragraph (3), the”;

(2) in paragraph (2)(B)(i) by striking “, a claim for reopening a prior decision on a claim, or a claim for an increase in benefits;” and inserting “or a supplemental claim;”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(3) The requirement to provide notice under paragraph (1) shall not apply with respect to a supplemental claim that is filed within the timeframe set forth in subparagraphs (B) and (D) of section 5110(a)(2) of this title.”.

(c) MODIFICATION OF RULE REGARDING DISALLOWED CLAIMS.—Section 5103A(f) of such title is amended—

(1) by striking “reopen” and inserting “re-adjudicate”; and

(2) by striking “material” and inserting “relevant”.

(d) MODIFICATION OF DUTY TO ASSIST CLAIMANTS.—Section 5103A of such title is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (e) through (g) as subsections (g) through (i), respectively; and