

sexual abuse material or images believed to be of minors. That gap limits prosecution.

The Combating Online Predators Act closes that gap by criminalizing knowing threats to distribute these depictions with intent to coerce or extort. This is a targeted bipartisan fix that gives prosecutors the tools they need to stop these predators and protect our kids.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support for this bill. I hope that this bill passes out of the House today and swiftly passes out of the Senate to be signed by the President.

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

Ms. LEE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HARRIS).

Mr. HARRIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the internet is increasingly becoming a hostile place for children. The practice of sextortion is becoming far too common. As many as one in five teenagers report experiencing sextortion.

That is why I rise in support of the Combating Online Predators Act, which takes decisive action against the practice of sextortion.

This bill updates current child sexual abuse material laws to ensure that sextortion is included so that no minor can be threatened with the release of explicit content that depicts them.

As bad actors use the internet to harm kids, Congress must ensure our laws are updated to protect them. Those who seek to threaten our youth through sextortion must be held accountable, and this bill ensures they will.

Mr. Speaker, I am so grateful to my colleague, Representative LEE, for leading this effort to protect children from this harmful practice. I am pleased with the widespread and bipartisan support for it, and I urge my colleagues to support the Combating Online Predators Act.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, to close, I strongly support H.R. 6719, the Combating Online Predators Act. I encourage all of our colleagues to support it, and I praise the gentlewoman for her leadership on this legislation.

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

Ms. LEE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their thoughtful debate and for their support on this important issue. This legislation addresses a clear and dangerous gap in Federal law that predators have exploited to harm children online.

By explicitly criminalizing threats to distribute child sex abuse material, Congress ensures these heinous acts are prosecuted with the seriousness that they deserve. This legislation reflects the bipartisan recognition that protecting children from exploitation is a shared responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, it provides law enforcement with the clarity, consistency, and

tools necessary to hold offenders accountable and prevent future harm.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to pass H.R. 6719, the Combating Online Predators Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WIED). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. LEE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6719, 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.

CHILD PREDATORS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. HARRIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6715) to prohibit sexual exploitation and sexually explicit depictions of minors, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6715

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 “Child Predators Accountability Act”.

SEC. 2. PREVENTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND SEXUALLY EXPLICIT DEPICTIONS OF MINORS.

(a) SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN.—Section 2251(a) of title 18, United States Code, is amended by inserting after “coerces any minor to engage in,” the following: “or be depicted engaging in.”

(b) SEXUALLY EXPLICIT DEPICTIONS OF A MINOR FOR IMPORTATION.—Section 2260(a) of title 18, United States Code, is amended by inserting after “coerces any minor to engage in,” the following: “or be depicted engaging in.”

(c) DEFINITION.—Section 2256 of title 18, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (10), by striking “and” at the end;

(2) in paragraph (11), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(12) ‘engage in’, when used with respect to a minor depicted in a visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct, includes—

“(A) the participation of the minor in the sexually explicit conduct; or

“(B) the depiction of the minor in the visual depiction of the sexually explicit conduct, regardless of whether the minor participated in such conduct, if the defendant intentionally included such minor in the visual depiction.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HARRIS) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RASKIN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HARRIS of North Carolina. 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. 6715.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HARRIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the state of child protection in our Nation and around the world is deeply alarming and demands our immediate and undivided attention.

Sadly, in today’s world and today’s age, child sexual abuse material, better known as CSAM, has never been more prevalent.

□ 1610

According to a study from February 2025, 1 in 12 children worldwide have been subjected to online sexual exploitation or abuse. Even more troubling: The vast majority of child sexual abuse, over 90 percent in many documented cases, is perpetrated by someone whom the child knows or is related to, whether family members, trusted adults, or acquaintances.

These are not distant strangers. They are often people with direct access to our children, making the betrayal all the more heartbreaking.

We, in Congress, have a duty to act decisively. We must commit ourselves fully to making the internet and our entire society a safer place for America’s children and children everywhere.

My bill, the Child Predators Accountability Act, strengthens the criminal code to hold perpetrators accountable and to protect our children.

Under current law, the definition of “sexually explicit material” requires that a child be engaged in sexually explicit conduct for the material to qualify. This narrow wording has created a dangerous loophole.

In one egregious case, a defendant produced a sexually explicit video that included a child who was merely present, passive, and not actively participating. Since the child was not deemed to be “engaged in” the act, the conviction for distributing CSAM was overturned. The predator was let off the hook for using a child due to a technicality in the statute.

Mr. Speaker, this cannot stand. We cannot allow one rogue case to lead to a domino effect of bad case law and less protection for these vulnerable children. No predator should escape accountability simply because they included a minor in the frame but did not physically touch or direct them in the explicit conduct.

Such content is profoundly abusive. It exploits the child’s presence, dignity, and vulnerability for depraved purposes. It inflicts lasting harm and deserves to be unequivocally classified as CSAM.

My bill delivers a precise, necessary fix. It amends the law to clarify that the depiction of a minor would qualify

as sexually explicit conduct, regardless of whether the minor participated in such conduct, if the defendant intentionally included the minor in the visual depiction. This closes a loophole and equips prosecutors and law enforcement with clearer tools that will ensure justice for the victims.

The Child Predators Accountability Act is a straightforward, commonsense measure that will help hold exploiters accountable and prevent future abuses.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join with me in defending our children by voting in favor of this bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I am rising in strong support of H.R. 6715, the Child Predators Accountability Act of 2025.

Mr. Speaker, the decision that the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina references out of the Seventh Circuit, *United States v. Howard*, threatens to significantly limit prosecutors' ability to hold some of the worst child predators to account legally. The question may appear to be technical, but the human consequences are grave and brutally simple.

Title 18 of the United States Code, section 2251(a), criminalizes the production of child sex abuse material. For decades, prosecutors have used the law to target predators who prey on children or who produce ghastly images of child sex abuse, but the Seventh Circuit's ruling in the *Howard* case in 2020 jeopardized prosecutors' ability to go after these dangerous people until they actually abuse the child and create an image of the abuse.

The *Howard* decision narrowed the scope of section 2251(a), holding that the mere physical presence of the minor in a visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct does not automatically violate the statute. To obtain a conviction for production of CSAM in the Seventh Circuit, the child in the photo, video, or image must themselves be engaged in the explicit conduct.

This is an absurd reading that we can and must legislatively resolve. The *Howard* ruling undermines the ability to prosecute common scenarios involving the surreptitious recording of kids; for example, when criminals plant concealed cameras in bathrooms, locker rooms, and bedrooms to record sexually explicit images of children who are unaware that they are even being filmed.

Criminals who record themselves sexually violating very young children, such as infants and toddlers, who are too young to understand that they are being filmed in sexually explicit scenarios could also conceivably avoid prosecution under the pinched reasoning of the *Howard* decision.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 6715 would make clear that even the passive use of a child in the production of child sex abuse materials is a crime, and it will eliminate any confusion caused by the Seventh Circuit's ruling in *Howard*.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support the legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HARRIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. BIGGS).

Mr. BIGGS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina for his work on this bill and the bipartisan work from the Subcommittee on Crime and Federal Government Surveillance, which has worked on this, and I appreciate that very much.

The ranking member, the whole committee, and the entire Committee on the Judiciary has banded together, which if you ever watched the Judiciary Committee, you would know that this is a remarkable time.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the support that we have here because anyone who exploits a child for sexual purposes must face full accountability and must face the full measure of the law.

There cannot be loopholes or technicalities that would let predators slip through the cracks, and when we find them, this body has to fix that. Protecting minors from sexual exploitation remains a core priority for our Subcommittee on Crime and Federal Government Surveillance.

A recent decision by the Seventh Circuit in *United States v. Howard* exposed a dangerous gap in current law. Both of the previous speakers have spoken to that, but that really is the crux of this. The court overturned a conviction for producing child sexual abuse material because the minor—a sleeping, clothed child—was merely present in the video, not touched, actively involved, or engaged.

In that case, the defendant filmed himself in sexual conduct near his 9-year-old niece. The court ruled that he did not use her under existing statute because she was passive. That interpretation is utterly unacceptable.

Predators should not evade justice simply because the child whom they exploit is unaware. The harm is real. The intent is clear. This loophole weakens 18 United States Code, section 2251(a), and related statutes, making it harder to prosecute offenders and easier for exploiters to walk free and then exploit others and create more victims.

The Child Predators Accountability Act of 2025 closes this gap by clarifying that a minor is engaged in sexually explicit conduct when the offender intentionally includes the child in the depiction, even passively. This is a straightforward, bipartisan fix that ensures that Federal law captures these heinous acts and imposes the penalties that they deserve.

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

Mr. HARRIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentleman from Arizona.

Mr. BIGGS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I commend law enforcement for their tireless work of protecting children, and I commend the work of this committee and the lead sponsor of this bill, Mr. HARRIS.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6715 so that every child predator is fully held to account. Let's do this today. Let's get it out of the Senate quickly and get it up to the President's desk to be signed and enacted immediately.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Georgia (Mrs. MCBATH), my good friend who is the ranking member on the Crime and Federal Government Surveillance Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. MCBATH. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member RASKIN for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 6715, the Child Predators Accountability Act of 2025.

The safety of our children is foundational to a secure and just society. Yet this foundation is broken every time a child is victimized.

Due to narrow interpretations, prosecutors have sometimes been required to prove that a child was visibly, actively participating in sexual conduct in order to bring charges, but exploitation doesn't always look the same. A child does not have to be visibly active for harm to be real, lasting, and devastating.

□ 1620

Tell me, what would it mean for the child victims if we required more?

The properly named Child Predators Accountability Act makes an important and very necessary clarification for a circuit split that could allow predators to evade justice. By making it uniformly illegal to depict a minor in sexually explicit material, regardless of whether that child appears to be actively participating, this change strengthens the law so that predators can no longer hide behind technical loopholes while continuing to exploit our children, making sure that anyone who dares to prey on the most vulnerable will face consequences for their crimes. This legislation would clarify Federal standards nationwide and restore consistency in how these horrific offenses are prosecuted, ensuring that justice does not depend solely on geography or jurisdiction.

The protection of our children from monstrous crimes transcends political television. I call on each and every one of my colleagues to pass this legislation and send a very clear and strong message that the exploitation of children will be met with the full, unyielding, inescapable force of justice. This bill empowers law enforcement and prosecutors by giving them unified and stronger tools to pursue cases and dismantle these exploitation efforts.

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

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentlewoman from Georgia.

Mrs. MCBATH. Mr. Speaker, when the law is clear, justice can move more swiftly and more effectively, allowing

victims to begin the long process of healing with the knowledge that their government is standing with them and for them.

This legislation is about protecting the most vulnerable among us.

The time for action is now. I support the Child Predators Accountability Act, and I urge all my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. HARRIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6715, the Child Predators Accountability Act, and I thank my colleague from North Carolina for his leadership in advancing this important legislation.

Protecting our Nation's children is among the most solemn responsibilities entrusted to Congress.

Our criminal statutes must be clear and effective so that individuals who exploit children are held fully accountable under the law. When ambiguity exists, it can undermine enforcement and allow dangerous conduct to fall outside the reach of existing statutes.

Recently, a court decision in *United States v. Howard* highlighted a technical gap in Federal child exploitation law, one that exposed the need for greater clarity in how certain conduct is defined and prosecuted.

In that case, the Court interpreted existing statutory language in a way that limited accountability, even though a child's image was used in sexually exploitative conduct.

Mr. Speaker, that outcome underscores an important reality. A child is harmed whenever their image is intentionally placed into a sexualized setting. The absence of physical contact or active participation does not eliminate the harm or the violation.

This is an issue that I have personally heard about from law enforcement officers who work on these cases every day. I commend Mr. HARRIS, Chairman BIGGS, and Chairman JORDAN for ensuring that we address it through the Child Predators Accountability Act, and I thank my colleagues for joining with us in this important work.

H.R. 6715 closes a dangerous loophole. It restores clarity, strengthens enforcement, and reaffirms our commitment to protecting children and upholding justice.

Mr. Speaker, there should be no ambiguity when it comes to the criminal nature of the sexual exploitation of children. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6715.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, we seem to have the bipartisan convergence that we need to reverse the error of the interpretation that is in the Howard decision to make sure we can always hold accountable the perpetrators of this seriously corrosive crime.

H.R. 6715 strives to right this wrong, and I am proud that we are acting in a bipartisan way to do that. I urge my

colleagues to support the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HARRIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the members of the Committee on the Judiciary for unanimously supporting this bill in markup. I am grateful for my colleagues who have all risen to speak today and to the ranking member and leadership on the other side that have worked together with us.

Mr. Speaker, I urge swift passage of my legislation, the Child Predators Accountability Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HARRIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6715, 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.

COERCION AND SEXUAL ABUSE FREE ENVIRONMENT ACT

Mr. BIGGS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6732) to prohibit unlawful coercion of a minor, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6732

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 "Coercion and Sexual Abuse Free Environment Act" or the "CSAFE Act".

SEC. 2. UNLAWFULLY COMPELLING CHILDREN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2422 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(c)(1) Whoever, using the mail or any facility or means of interstate or foreign commerce, or within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States, intentionally compels a minor to—

“(A) engage in self-harm, including suicide or attempted suicide;

“(B) commit animal crushing (as defined in section 48);

“(C) engage in abusive or degrading non-sexual conduct (whether or not physical injury results) for which any person can be charged with a criminal offense; or

“(D) engage in sexually explicit conduct, as defined in section 2256(2)(A), shall be punished as provided in paragraph (2).

“(2) Whoever violates, attempts to violate, or conspires to violate paragraph (1)—

“(A) shall be fined under this title, imprisoned not more than 10 years, or both;

“(B) if serious bodily injury results, shall be fined under this title, imprisoned not more than 20 years, or both; or

“(C) if death results, shall be fined under this title, imprisoned for any term of years or for life, or both.

“(3) In this subsection, the term ‘compel’ includes the use of a threat, extortion, blackmail, fraud, deceit, or manipulation.”.

(b) JUVENILE DELINQUENCY CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 5032 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by striking “or 2241(c),” and inserting “2241(c), or 2242(c),”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. BIGGS) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RASKIN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BIGGS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BIGGS of Arizona. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the horror of child abuse and exploitation online continues to remain a significant problem across the country.

The Subcommittee on Crime and Federal Government Surveillance made combating child exploitation a top priority in the 118th Congress, and we continue to do so in the 119th Congress.

Unfortunately, criminals are continuously finding new ways to force minors to commit sexual or violent acts against themselves or others.

Violent online networks are methodically targeting vulnerable underage populations across the United States. These violent groups, often known as gore groups, target children and force them into unthinkable acts of violence against themselves, against others, and even against animals.

These groups use social media or other popular platforms such as Roblox or Discord to elicit private information or sexual images from minors, and they use that information and that material to blackmail victims into mutilating themselves or taking other violent action against friends, family members, or pets.

Many of these networks rapidly emerge, create alliances, and then quickly dissolve, making it difficult to determine leadership structure. Many criminal actors are located overseas, and many of these offenders are also minors themselves.

The most prominent example is the online extremist network known as 764. Mr. Speaker, 764 is a decentralized online network that glorifies violence and encourages participation in criminal activities such as sextortion and doxing. A disturbed young man, who has since been arrested and jailed, started the 764 network in 2020.

While decentralized, the group has grown into a vast array of online predators seemingly in a dark competition of who can manipulate children to commit the most violent acts.

In 2024, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, NCMIC,