

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1978

To authorize the Attorney General to make grants to improve the ability of State and local governments to prevent the abduction of children by family members, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 2, 2009

Ms. WOOLSEY (for herself, Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California, Mr. STARK, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, and Mr. GRIJALVA) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To authorize the Attorney General to make grants to improve the ability of State and local governments to prevent the abduction of children by family members, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Family Abduction Pre-
5 vention Act of 2009”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

1 (1) each year more than 203,000 children in
2 the United States (approximately 78 percent of all
3 abducted children) are abducted by a family mem-
4 ber, usually a parent;

5 (2) more than half of the parents who abduct
6 their children have a history of alcohol or substance
7 abuse, a criminal record, or a history of violence;

8 (3) the most common motive for family abduc-
9 tion is revenge against the other parent, not pro-
10 tecting the child's safety;

11 (4) children who are abducted by family mem-
12 bers suffer emotional, psychological, and often phys-
13 ical abuse at the hands of their abductors;

14 (5) children who are victims of family abduc-
15 tions are forced to leave behind family, friends, their
16 homes, their neighborhoods, their schools, and all
17 that is familiar to them;

18 (6) children who are victims of family abduc-
19 tions are often told that the parent who did not
20 abduct the child has died, does not love them, or will
21 harm them;

22 (7) children who are abducted by their parents
23 or other family members are sometimes forced to
24 live in fear of discovery and may be compelled to

1 conceal their true identity, including their real
2 names, family histories, and even their gender;

3 (8) children who are victims of family abduc-
4 tions are often denied the opportunity to attend
5 school or to receive health and dental care;

6 (9) child psychologists and law enforcement au-
7 thorities now classify family abduction as a form of
8 child abuse;

9 (10) approximately 70 percent of local law en-
10 forcement agencies do not have written guidelines
11 for what to do in the event of a family abduction or
12 how to facilitate the recovery of an abducted child;

13 (11) the first few hours of a family abduction
14 are crucial to recovering an abducted child, and val-
15 uable hours are lost when law enforcement is not
16 prepared to employ the most effective techniques to
17 locate and recover abducted children;

18 (12) when parents who may be inclined to
19 abduct their own children receive counseling and
20 education on the harm suffered by children under
21 these circumstances, the incidence of family abduc-
22 tions is greatly reduced; and

23 (13) where practiced, the flagging of school
24 records has proven to be an effective tool in assisting
25 law enforcement authorities find abducted children.

1 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) FAMILY ABDUCTION.—The term “family
4 abduction” means the taking, keeping, or concealing
5 of a child or children by a parent, other family mem-
6 ber, or person acting on behalf of the parent or fam-
7 ily member, that prevents another individual from
8 exercising lawful custody or visitation rights.

9 (2) FLAGGING.—The term “flagging” means
10 the process of notifying law enforcement authorities
11 of the name and address of any person requesting
12 the school records of an abducted child.

13 (3) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian tribe”
14 means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other orga-
15 nized group or community, including any Alaska Na-
16 tive village or regional or village corporation as de-
17 fined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Na-
18 tive Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.),
19 which is recognized as eligible for the special pro-
20 grams and services provided by the United States to
21 Indians because of their status as Indians.

22 (4) STATE.—The term “State” means each of
23 the several States, the District of Columbia, the
24 Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth
25 of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa,

1 Guam, the Virgin Islands, any territory or posses-
2 sion of the United States, and any Indian tribe.

3 **SEC. 4. GRANTS TO STATES.**

4 (a) **MATCHING GRANTS.**—The Attorney General shall
5 make grants to States for projects involving—

6 (1) the extradition of individuals suspected of
7 committing a family abduction;

8 (2) the investigation by State and local law en-
9 forcement agencies of family abduction cases;

10 (3) the training of State and local law enforce-
11 ment agencies in responding to family abductions
12 and recovering abducted children, including the de-
13 velopment of written guidelines and technical assist-
14 ance;

15 (4) outreach and media campaigns to educate
16 parents on the dangers of family abductions; and

17 (5) the flagging of school records.

18 (b) **MATCHING REQUIREMENT.**—Not less than 50
19 percent of the cost of a project for which a grant is made
20 under this section shall be provided by non-Federal
21 sources.

22 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

23 For the purpose of carrying out this Act, there are
24 authorized to be appropriated to the Attorney General

- 1 such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years
- 2 2010, 2011, and 2012.

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