

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

4TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

CONSTITUENT SERVICE CENTERS:

MONMOUTH
112 Village Center Drive
Freehold, NJ 07728-2510
(732) 780-3035

OCEAN
405 Route 539
Plumsted, NJ 08514-2303
(609) 286-2571; (732) 350-2300

MERCER
4573 South Broad Street
Hamilton, NJ 08620-2215
(609) 585-7878

2373 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3004
(202) 225-3765

<http://chrissmith.house.gov>



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

SENIOR MEMBER, FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN, AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE

WESTERN HEMISPHERE
SUBCOMMITTEE

CO-CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

CO-CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA

DEAN, NEW JERSEY DELEGATION

International Megan’s Law to Prevent Demand for Child Sex Trafficking

*U.S. Rep. Chris Smith
Floor Statement on H.R. 4573
May 20, 2014*

Mr. Speaker, protecting children from violence and predatory behavior are among the highest duties and responsibilities of government.

As prime author of the landmark Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000—as well as reauthorizations of that law in 2003 and 2005—I believe the five bills under consideration by the House today will significantly prevent the horrific crimes of human trafficking, protect and assist victims and prosecute those who exploit and abuse.

The International Megan’s Law to Prevent Demand for Child Sex Trafficking is a serious attempt to mitigate child sex tourism by noticing countries of destination concerning the travel plans of convicted pedophiles. And to protect American children, the bill encourages the President to use bilateral agreements and assistance to establish reciprocal notification so that we will know when convicted child-sex offenders are coming here.

In 1994, a young girl in my home town and district was lured into the home of a convicted pedophile who lived across the street from her home. Megan Kanka, seven, was raped and murdered.

No one, including Megan Kanka’s parents, knew that their neighbor had been convicted and jailed for child sexual assault. The combination of concern for children and outrage towards

those who abuse led to enactment of Megan's Laws—public sex offender registries—in every state in the country.

It is imperative that we take the lessons we have learned on how to protect our children from known child sex predators within our borders and expand those protections globally. Child predators thrive on secrecy, a secrecy that allows them to commit heinous crimes against children with impunity and without any meaningful accountability. Megan's Law – which its emphasis on notification – must go global, to protect American children and children worldwide.

The International Labor Organization estimates that 1.8 million children are victims of commercial sexual exploitation around the world each year.

A deeply-disturbing 2010 report by the Government Accountability Office entitled “Current Situation Results in Thousands of Passports Issued to Registered Sex Offenders” found that at least 4,500 U.S. passports were issued to registered sex offenders in fiscal year 2008. The GAO emphasized that this number is probably understated due to the limitations of the data that it was able to access and analyze.

Meanwhile, the law enforcement and media reports continue to document Americans on the U.S. sex offender registries who were caught sexually abusing children in East Asia, Central and South America. It's the same horror movie replayed over and over. We must do more to warn destination countries so that they can, in turn, protect their children from sex tourism. We have the information and technology at our disposal to determine who constitutes a registered child sex offender to ensure that appropriate government officials in destination countries are noticed in a timely fashion.

With very limited resources, the Department of Homeland Security's Angel Watch program has been doing outstanding work in alerting countries about the problem of American sex offenders who travel abroad to sexually abuse trafficked children in child sex tourism. H.R. 4573 would codify and streamline this excellent program, ensuring that actionable information about child-sex offender travel gets to destination countries in time for those countries to assess the potential dangers—and respond appropriately, whether that is to allow entry, deny entry or visa, monitor travel, limit travel, etc. Once notified, nations are empowered to take protective actions.

The goals of this legislation do not stop at protecting children overseas from U.S. predators. Sex offenders around the world are now able to cross borders and oceans to carry out their nefarious activity under the cloak of anonymity and disappear before a child is able or willing to reveal the crime. The International Megan's Law would establish the model needed for the U.S. to persuade other countries to take action to stop child sex tourism originating within

their borders and threatening children in the United States and elsewhere. The goal is reciprocal notice.

H.R. 4573 directs the President to include guidance in diplomacy, training, and technical assistance abroad on how other countries can create their own public or private sex offender registries similar to what we have in the United States, and how they can use these registries to alert the United States when a child-sex offender is intending to travel here. In this way, we will be better equipped to protect American children from sexual exploitation and trafficking. I personally have spoken to foreign officials and non-governmental representatives who have asked me when the United States Congress is going to do something about American sex offenders who are traveling to their countries to rape their children. H.R. 4573, International Megan's Law to Prevent Demand for Child Sex Trafficking, is the answer to that question. I would like to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their hard work over the last several weeks on this bill.

In sum, I hope my colleagues will support this urgently needed legislation.