
IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN ACT

BACKGROUND

Protecting our country's most vulnerable children has long been a national priority. That's why Congress passed the *Missing Children's Assistance Act* in 1984, establishing a grant to support efforts to find missing children and prevent child exploitation. For more than 30 years, the grant has helped the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) coordinate and support state and local efforts to recover children who are missing and protect youth who are victims of sexual exploitation.

As former President Ronald Reagan explained when opening NCMEC, "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."

Today, NCMEC operates as a unique public-private partnership — working with families, law enforcement, schools, community leaders, and nonprofits to help build a national response to crises and crimes affecting some of the most vulnerable children across the country:

- More than 465,000 cases of missing children were reported in 2016, and NCMEC assisted with approximately 21,000 of those cases.
- Of the cases with which NCMEC assisted, 90 percent were endangered runaways.
- Roughly one in six endangered runaways was likely a victim of child sex trafficking.

Over the years, Congress has reformed the law to help ensure the grantee — NCMEC — has the tools to do its job effectively and that taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly.

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To update and streamline the *Missing Children's Assistance Act*, Reps. Brett Guthrie (R-KY) and Joe Courtney (D-CT) introduced the *Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act* (H.R. 1808). The bipartisan legislation will help:

- ✓ Encourage and increase public awareness of new and innovative ways to recover and protect missing and exploited children;
- ✓ Better protect the growing number of children who go missing from state care and those who are victims of sex trafficking;
- ✓ Improve assistance in identifying and locating abductors, criminal offenders, and missing children;
- ✓ Prevent children from becoming the victims of exploitation online; and
- ✓ Provide transparency surrounding recovery and prevention efforts.