

## **Child Protection Improvements Act of 2008**

The [Child Protection Improvements Act of 2008 \(S.2756\)](#) will expand and make permanent a national child safety protection pilot program established in the [2003 PROTECT Act \(P.L. 108-21\)](#). The program was created to allow youth-serving organizations such as [MENTOR/the National Mentoring Partnership](#) and the [Boys and Girls Clubs of America](#) to run FBI background checks on prospective volunteers to determine whether they present a potential threat to children. As part of the process, the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#) analyzed the rap sheets of prospective volunteers and made fitness determination recommendations regarding whether the applicant was suitable to work with children.

Since the pilot program was created, 37,000 background checks have been performed. Of these volunteer applicants, 6.1 percent were found to have criminal backgrounds that rendered them unfit to work with children, including sexual crimes against children. Nearly 40 percent had moved across state lines with the hope of leaving their records of conviction behind and once again having unfettered access to children. The program is set to expire on July 30, 2008.

Despite the effectiveness of the pilot program, it was limited in several respects. First, only a limited number of organizations could access the system, and secondly, inconsistencies in the appropriations process left many organizations unable to apply for background checks. To address these deficiencies, the Child Protection Improvements Act of 2008 opens the program to more youth-serving organizations and provides a means for a steady stream of resources to allow the program to grow toward the goal of protecting more children.

Specifically, the Child Protection Improvements Act of 2008 will:

- Make the pilot program permanent;
- Create an Applicant Processing Center (APC) to assist youth-serving organizations with the administrative tasks related to accessing the system, including the collection of fingerprints and working with the FBI on fees;
- Establish the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children fitness determination process permanently; and
- Authorize a fee of no more than \$25 to pay for the FBI for the background check and to off-set the expenses incurred by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the new Applicant Processing Center.

The bill has been endorsed by the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#) and a wide cross section of youth-serving, nonprofit organizations, including the [American Camp Association](#), [Afterschool Alliance](#), [America's Promise Alliance](#), [Big Brothers Big Sisters of America](#), the [Boys and Girls Clubs of America](#), [Communities In Schools, Inc.](#), [First Focus](#), [MENTOR/The National Mentoring Partnership](#), and [YMCA of the USA](#).