

LEGISLATIVE WATCH

Legislative Watch reports on pending U.S. legislation relevant to human rights and humanitarian law. This list is not meant to be comprehensive.

Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act of 1999, S.1227

Major Sponsor: Late Sen. John H. Chafee (R-RI)

Status: Referred to the Senate Committee on Finance on June 16, 1999.

Substance: The bill amends Title IV of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (Welfare Reform Act) of 1996 to allow states the option of providing medical assistance under the Medicaid program to eligible legal immigrant pregnant women and children, who otherwise are ineligible for Medicaid until five years after their arrival. If passed, the bill would restore Medicaid eligibility to an estimated 130,000 children and 50,000 pregnant women annually.

Northern Mariana Islands Covenant Implementation Act, S.1052

Major Sponsor: Sen. Frank H. Murkowski (R-AK)

Status: Referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on May 13, 1999, which requested executive comment from the Department of Justice, Office of Management and Budget. To be placed on floor of Senate for discussion.

Substance: The bill further implements Public Law 94-241 approving the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) in Political Union with the United States. It directs the Attorney General to establish, administer, and enforce an effective program of immigration control for the CNMI. The US Immigration and Nationality Act currently does not extend to the CNMI, and the Commonwealth lacks any formal procedure for adjudicating asylum and withholding of removal claims.

Freedom From Sexual Trafficking Act of 1999, H.R.1356

Major Sponsor: Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ)

Status: Referred to the House Committees on International Relations, the Judiciary, and Banking and Financial Services on March 25, 1999; referred to the House Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy on April 16, 1999; referred to the House Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights on May 4, 1999, which held a Consideration and Mark-up session on August 4, 1999; referred to the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims on September 24,

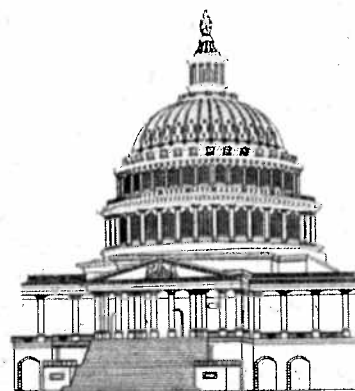
1999. Hearing held on November 9, 1999.

Substance: The bill aims to end international sexual trafficking, defined as "the taking of a person across an international border for the purpose of a commercial sexual act . . . by fraud, force, or coercion, or if the person has not attained the age of 18 years." The bill calls upon countries to criminally prosecute sex traffickers, and mandates the withdrawal of non-humanitarian aid to countries that refuse to take minimal action against these sex traffickers. This bill creates an Office for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking under the Secretary of State. It allocates money to the Secretary of State to assist other countries in programs and activities designed to eliminate sexual trafficking, and to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to assist the victims of sexual trafficking. It also protects alien victims against removal from the United States.

Cuban Food and Medicine Security Act of 1999, S.926

Major Sponsor: Sen. Christopher J. Dodd (D-CT)

Status: Referred to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on April 29, 1999.



Substance: The bill aims to provide Cubans with access to food and medicine from the United States. Under this bill, the restrictions that the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 placed on trade and financial transactions with Cuba would not apply to "the export of any food and other agricultural products, medicines, medical supplies, medical instruments, or medical equipment, or with respect to travel incident to the sale or delivery of food and other agricultural products." Ⓢ

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