



GOVERNMENT GROUP CREATES CHILD ABUSE BILL

Two child sexual abuse cases are dominating the media right now, the Jerry Sandusky case out of Penn State and the Bernie Fine case out of Syracuse. A task force of national experts has been supportive of a bill that was introduced earlier this week by United States senators John Kerry (Democrat from Massachusetts) and Susan Collins (Republican from Maine) and House Representatives Lloyd Doggett (Democrat from Texas) and Joseph Crowley (Democrat from New York). These individuals were also joined on their committee by ten members of the House Ways and Means Committee. Together, they created a bill that would make a change in the number of fatalities that result from child abuse and neglect. The bill would also make changes to the child welfare system. In the United States, seven or more children die per day from abuse and neglect, which equates to over 2,500 per year. This number represents the 50 percent undercounting in the estimated figure of 1,560, which is an official estimate. In the country, every 36 seconds a child is abused or neglected. Only 40 percent of abused children in the country with substantiated cases receive services, according to the United States Department of Health and Human Services and MarketWatch. Reps from the National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths, or NCECAD, are concerned that despite the media's coverage of the recent child sex abuse scandals, this will still not create additional pressure on the government to better deal with these problems. The spokesperson for the National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths, Kimberly Day, said the following: "It is important that the media is covering the most recent high profile and horrific child sexual abuse cases, but it is also important that the public understand that what they are hearing is only part of a larger problem of child abuse and neglect in the United States. The proposed bill will provide a national strategy for improving our child protection system by recommending practices that protect children and prevent abuse and neglect". Senator Collins exclaimed: "This legislation is an important step that Congress and our nation need to take in order to better protect our children from abuse and neglect. This is not a Democratic or Republican issue--this is an American issue--one that we can't wish away, but that we must face head on and work to eradicate. Our legislation would establish a commission to develop a comprehensive national strategy for reducing child abuse fatalities. An increased understanding and awareness of child abuse and neglect can lead to improvement in agency systems and practices and help prevent future child abuse fatalities." Representative Crowley went on to explain the following: "As a father to three young kids, it breaks my heart to hear the thousands of stories of children suffering from abuse or neglect every day. What's worse is the alarming number of children who die each year from mistreatment. The simple fact is, even one child's death from abuse, neglect or maltreatment is one too many. This is an issue of grave concern and one that deserves a national focus. That's why I'm proud to fight alongside tireless advocates like the National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths, and I am glad to have worked with them and my colleagues in creating legislation that will help determine how we as a nation can better protect our children."

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