



Senate Approves Feinstein-Hutchison Measure to Prevent Kidnapping by Family Members

*- Bill authorizes \$500,000 in matching funds to local law enforcement to assist in
investigating and prosecuting these cases -*

November 17, 2006

Washington, DC – The Senate last night unanimously passed a measure sponsored by U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas) that would help prevent abductions of children by family members and authorizes \$500,000 in matching grants for FY2008 to help fund local law enforcement efforts to investigate and prosecute these cases.

“The kidnapping of a child by a family member is our nation’s most common form of abduction. These kidnappings represent a growing epidemic that receives little or no attention from the media or law enforcement. In fact, approximately 70 percent of States lack the funding and the legal guidelines necessary to investigate and prosecute these tragic cases,” Senator Feinstein said. **“The bill approved by the Senate provides matching grants to give State and local law enforcement the tools they need. It is an important first step towards helping to alleviate the trauma experienced by the thousands of children who are abducted by a family member each year.”**

“More than half of abducting parents have a history of violence and abuse, yet these abductions are often overlooked because they are viewed as domestic disputes,” Senator Hutchison said. **“This legislation will help establish guidelines and provide new funding to law enforcement agencies to solve these cases. We must give family abduction the concern and attention needed to return missing children home safely.”**

Bill Summary

Specifically, the “Family Abduction Prevention Act” bill would authorize \$500,000 in matching grants for FY2008 (and funds, as necessary, through FY 2009 and FY 2010), to states to assist with costs associated with family abduction prevention, including:

- **Costs associated with the extradition of individuals suspected of committing the crime of family abduction.**
- **Costs borne by state and local law enforcement agencies to investigate cases of missing children.**

- **Training for local and state law enforcement agencies in responding to family abductions.** The first few hours and days after an abduction are most important in recovering a child. Yet, many state and local law enforcement agencies are unsure the best way to respond to a family abduction.
- **Outreach and media campaigns to educate parents on the dangers of family abductions.**
- **Assistance to public schools to help with costs associated with “flagging” school records.** Where flagging is mandatory, school districts notify law enforcement authorities when a missing child’s school records are requested for transfer to a new school. With the new school address in hand, law enforcement has another vital piece of information to locate the missing child. Unfortunately, schools are financially strapped, so any assistance from the federal government would encourage states to adopt laws to mandate the flagging of school records.

Background

Each year, over 200,000 children – 78 percent of all abductions in the United States – are kidnapped by a family member, usually a non-custodial parent. More than half of abducting parents have a history of domestic violence, substance abuse, or a criminal record.

Most State and local law enforcement agencies do not treat these abductions as serious crimes. Approximately 70 percent of law enforcement agencies do not have written guidelines on responding to family abduction and many are not informed about the Federal laws available to help in the search and recovery of an abducted child.

Senator Feinstein and Hutchison previously worked together to pass the AMBER Alert law, creating a nationwide AMBER Alert network. The AMBER Alert program is a voluntary partnership between law-enforcement agencies and broadcasters to activate an urgent alert bulletin in serious child-abduction cases. AMBER Alert has been tremendously effective, resulting in the return of hundreds of children to their parents. But AMBER Alerts are not typically issued when the child is abducted by a family member.

###