

July 20, 2010

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1469, the Child Protection Improvements Act of 2009, will permanently authorize the National Child Safety Program.

Passed in 2003 as part of the PROTECT Act, the National Child Safety Pilot Program assists organizations in checking criminal records of volunteers before placing them as mentors with children. Every year, millions of Americans generously give their time and energy to volunteer and mentor children across the country. While most of these volunteers and mentors are only interested in being good role models to children, it is important that we are able to identify those who seek to do harm.

The National Child Safety Pilot Program has enabled youth-serving organizations to access the FBI's national fingerprint-based background check system since 2003. By providing access to the more comprehensive data in the FBI's database, rather than just the in-State background check that would otherwise be available, the program has helped to prevent child predators and sex offenders from getting access to children through legitimate mentoring programs.

Notably, 6 percent of checks have come back showing serious criminal records.

In a study of the pilot program, it was found that over 41 percent of the individuals with criminal histories had committed an offense in a State other than the State in which they were applying to be a volunteer. In these cases, a State-based search would not have provided a complete picture of the person's criminal record.

Over 50 percent of the individuals found to have a criminal history had falsely indicated on their application form that they did not have a criminal history, even when the volunteers knew a background check was going to be performed.

This is a noncontroversial fee-based program that has successfully provided invaluable

information to mentoring organizations at no cost to taxpayers. It makes sense to now make the program permanent.

I want to thank my colleague from California (Mr. *Schiff*) for his hard work on this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it.