

Mr SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, I rise in regard to H.R. 3796, the Adam Walsh Reauthorization Act of 2012. H.R. 3796 authorizes various grant programs originally established pursuant to the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006.

While I support reauthorizing these programs, I am concerned about what is missing from H.R. 3796. Unfortunately, the bill fails to address the many problems that the States and Indian tribes have encountered in implementing the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act, known as SORNA, which is one of the provisions of the original Adam Walsh Act. So far, only 15 States have been found by the Attorney General to be in compliance.

Years before SORNA became law, many States had developed their own sex offender registries and dedicated substantial resources and research to develop effective sex offender management systems. To ignore these efforts in favor of SORNA'S prescriptive "one size fits all" system is not only wasteful, but it could adversely affect public safety. I offered 10 amendments in the full committee markup of the bill seeking to provide States and tribes with more flexibility to cost effectively manage sex offenders and to more fully comply with SORNA. Despite the committee's failure to adopt all of these proposed improvements, there are several positive aspects of H.R. 3796 that make changes to the underlying bill which will assist States in this regard.

For example, the bill, as amended, ensures that provisions of the Byrne JAG grant funding, intended for distribution to local governments and entities, are not penalized by the States' noncompliance with SORNA.

In the absence of this provision, States that have been unable to comply with SORNA would soon suffer up to a 10 percent reduction in their Byrne JAG grant awards, which is a particularly harsh penalty in these difficult economic times. H.R. 3796 at least ensures that the localities that have no control over whether or not a State complies with SORNA are not penalized.

Three other positive aspects of the bill, as amended, are the following: the bill gives flexibility to put juveniles on a law enforcement agency registry only, not on the public registry, that is, juveniles can be only in the law enforcement-only registry, but not publicized. We had heard testimony that putting juveniles on a public registry would actually be counterproductive, and this bill protects that.

The bill reauthorizes funding under the Adam Walsh Act for treatment of juvenile sex offenders. And the bill requires the public safety impact of long-term or lifetime registration on juvenile registrants to be studied.

Finally, H.R. 3796 lowers the age after which certain juveniles adjudicated delinquent with a clean record can apply for removal from the sex offender registry from 25 years down to 15 years. This is an improvement to current law, given the research documenting that sex offender

treatment reduces recidivism by more than 90 percent for juveniles and that long-term public registry adversely impacts the rehabilitation of teenage offenders, though for the same reasons it would have been best to eliminate the requirement to put juveniles on the registry in the first place.

I am pleased, therefore, that H.R. 3796, in reauthorizing the Adam Walsh Act, has improved at least in these aspects. I regret that it didn't improve some of the things that weren't addressed in the bill. But I think it's important that we pass the bill, and I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this bill.