CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE

April 16, 2001

H.R. 1209
Child Status Protection Act of 2001

As ordered reported by the House Committee on the Judiciary on April 4, 2001

CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1209 would result in no significant costs to the federal government. The bill would affect direct spending and receipts, so pay-as-you-go procedures would apply, but we estimate that any such effects would be less than $500,000 annually. H.R. 1209 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

Under current law, unmarried children of United States citizens can apply for permanent U.S. residence as "immediate relatives" (a category with no limit on the number of entries) only if they are under the age of 21. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) determines a child's age at the time the agency reviews the application. Because of backlogs at INS, about 1,000 of the applications reviewed each year are for persons who have turned 21 since they filed their petitions. This places them in the "family-based preference" category, which is subject to annual limits, and in many cases delays approval for years.

H.R. 1209 would direct the INS to use the child's age when the petition was originally filed. The bill's provisions would apply to petitions filed both before and after enactment. CBO expects that this legislation would increase the number of immigrant visas granted each year, because more applicants would be eligible for visas as immediate relatives and fewer would be shifted to the limited, family-based preference category.

The INS collects administrative fees when applications are filed, so H.R. 1209 would not affect the amount collected by that agency. In addition, the Department of State collects fees for issuing immigrant visas. These fees are deposited in the Treasury and classified as governmental receipts (revenues). Because H.R. 1209 would increase the number of immigrant visas granted each year, revenues from this visa fee would increase. However, we expect that the additional revenues would total less than $500,000 in any year.

Finally, enacting the bill could increase direct spending for certain federal benefit programs, but any increase in spending for those programs would likely be less than $500,000 annually because of the small number of persons affected.

The CBO staff contacts are Mark Grabowicz (for federal costs), and Erin Whitaker (for revenue impacts). This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.