



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

July 17, 2014

H.R. 3212 **Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2014**

*As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
on June 24, 2014*

H.R. 3212 would require several changes to the Department of State's efforts to track and resolve cases of international kidnapping and to prevent such abductions. The act would authorize the appropriation of \$1 million a year in 2015 and 2016 for a training program. Assuming appropriation of the specified amounts, CBO estimates that implementing that training would cost \$2 million over the 2015-2019 period. Pay-as-you-go procedures apply to this legislation because enacting the legislation would affect direct spending. However, CBO estimates that the increased mandatory spending under the bill would be offset by increased fee collections and thus that the net effect would not be significant. Enacting the legislation would not affect revenues.

Major Provisions

The Office of Children's Issues (OCI), a part of the department's Bureau of Consular Affairs, takes the lead on the federal government's response to both types of international child abduction: cases involving countries that are members of an international convention (the Hague Abduction Convention) as well as those involving nonmember countries. The act would require the department to:

- Monitor, evaluate, consult with, and report on countries that do not cooperate in or fail to resolve abduction cases and advise the President on subsequent actions that should be taken (as prescribed under the legislation),
- Establish memorandums of understanding with countries that are unlikely to join the Hague Abduction Convention,
- Report on certain aspects of its efforts to track and resolve cases of international child abduction and prevent abductions,
- Notify Members of the Congress about cases of child abduction affecting their constituents, and
- Train foreign entities on certain aspects of child abduction cases.

Effect on the Federal Budget

Assuming appropriation of the specified amounts, CBO estimates that implementing the required training would cost \$2 million over the 2015-2019 period.

Based on information from OCI, CBO estimates that implementing the other provisions of the act would require the department to hire 10 additional domestic staff and 20 additional overseas staff. The costs in 2014 for those employees would average \$137,000 and \$220,000 respectively, and would grow with inflation in subsequent years. In addition, CBO estimates that OCI would have one-time costs of about \$500,000 to update and revamp its data system to collect additional information on abduction cases and to generate data for reports to the Congress. CBO estimates that enacting those provisions would increase gross direct spending by roughly \$6 million each year.

OCI is currently funded by nonimmigrant visa fees that are retained by the department and spent on consular activities, and the department has indicated that it would use existing balances to cover the costs of implementing H.R. 3212. CBO expects that using balances for those activities would eventually constrain the department's spending on other consular activities. The department has the authority to raise certain fees to recover the costs of providing consular services. CBO estimates that the costs of implementing this bill would likely result in such a fee increase. Those additional collections would represent a credit against direct spending. CBO estimates that the increase in spending to implement the legislation and the increase in collections would offset so that the net effect on direct spending over the 2015-2024 period would be insignificant.

Intergovernmental and Private-Sector Impact

H.R. 3212 contains no intergovernmental mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

H.R. 3212 could impose private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA, by directing the Secretary of State to take one or more actions to compel foreign countries to cooperate in cases involving international child abduction. Among the actions that could be applied against foreign countries are sanctions that would impose mandates on entities in the private sector. For example, a sanction would impose a private-sector mandate if it prohibits the export of certain items sent as foreign assistance to entities in targeted countries. The cost of the mandate would be any forgone income directly related to the export of such items. Because the legislation requires the Secretary to minimize the adverse effects of the sanctions imposed, CBO expects that few private entities would be affected by the sanctions and that the cost of a mandate would probably fall below the annual threshold for private-sector mandates established in UMRA (\$152 million in 2014, adjusted annually for inflation).

Previous CBO Estimate

On November 25, 2013, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for H.R. 3212 as ordered reported by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on October 10, 2013. The two versions of the legislation are similar. However, H.R. 3212 as ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations includes an authorization of appropriations for training programs that is absent from the House version and, thus, CBO's estimates of its costs are correspondingly higher.

Staff Contacts

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Sunita D'Monte (for federal costs) and Marin Burnett (for the impact on the private sector). The estimate was approved by Theresa Gullo, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.