

105TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 4506

To provide for United States support for developmental alternatives for underage child workers.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 6, 1998

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey (for himself, Mr. LANTOS, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. CANADY of Florida, Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts, Mr. WOLF, Mr. KUCINICH, Mr. DIAZ-BALART, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. SOUDER, Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania, and Mr. PITTS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

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## A BILL

To provide for United States support for developmental alternatives for underage child workers.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “International Child  
5       Labor Relief Act of 1998”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       The Congress finds the following:

1           (1) Article 32 of the United Nations Convention  
2           on the Rights of the Child recognizes “the right of  
3           the child to be protected from economic exploitation  
4           and from performing any work that is likely to be  
5           hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education  
6           or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical,  
7           mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”.

8           (2) Article 2 of Convention 138 of the Inter-  
9           national Labor Organization, the Minimum Age  
10          Convention, states that the minimum age for admis-  
11          sion to employment or work “shall not be less than  
12          the age of completion of compulsory schooling and,  
13          in any case, shall not be less than 15 years.”.

14          (3) Convention 29 of International Labor Orga-  
15          nization, the Forced Labor Convention, which has  
16          been in effect since 1930, prohibits most forms of  
17          “forced or compulsory labor”, including all forced  
18          labor by people under the age of 18.

19          (4) Although it is among the most universally  
20          condemned of all human rights abuses, child labor is  
21          widely practiced. The International Labor Organiza-  
22          tion and the United Nations Children’s Fund  
23          (UNICEF) have estimated the total number of child  
24          workers to be between 200,000,000 and

1 250,000,000. More than 95 percent of those child  
2 workers live in developing countries.

3 (5) The International Labor Organization has  
4 estimated that 13.2 percent of all children 10 to 14  
5 years of age around the world were economically ac-  
6 tive in 1995. According to UNICEF, 75 percent of  
7 the child laborers in the 10 to 14 age group work  
8 6 days a week or more, and 50 percent work 9 hours  
9 a day or more. There are no reliable figures on  
10 workers under 10 years of age, though their num-  
11 bers are known to be significant. Reliable child labor  
12 statistics are not readily available, in part because  
13 many governments in the developing world are reluc-  
14 tant to document those activities, which are often il-  
15 legal under domestic laws, which violate inter-  
16 national standards, and which may be perceived as  
17 a failure of internal public policy.

18 (6) Notwithstanding international and domestic  
19 prohibitions, many children in developing countries  
20 are forced to work as debt-bonded and slave laborers  
21 in hazardous and exploitative industries. According  
22 to the United Nations Working Group on Contem-  
23 porary Forms of Slavery and the International  
24 Labor Organization, there are tens of millions of  
25 child slaves in the world today. Large numbers of

1 those slaves are involved in agricultural and domes-  
2 tic labor, the sex industry, the carpet and textile in-  
3 dustries, and quarrying and brick making.

4 (7) In many countries, children lack either the  
5 legal standing or the means to protect themselves  
6 from cruelty and exploitation in the workplace.

7 (8) The employment of children often interferes  
8 with the opportunities of such children for basic edu-  
9 cation. Furthermore, where it coexists with high  
10 rates of adult unemployment, the use of child labor  
11 likely denies gainful employment to millions of  
12 adults.

13 (9) While child labor is a complex and multi-  
14 faceted phenomenon that is tied to issues of poverty,  
15 educational opportunity, and culture, its most abu-  
16 sive and hazardous forms are repugnant to basic  
17 human rights and must be eliminated.

18 **SEC. 3. UNITED STATES SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENTAL**  
19 **ALTERNATIVES FOR UNDERAGE CHILD**  
20 **WORKERS.**

21 Of the funds authorized to be appropriated for each  
22 of the fiscal years 1999 through 2003 for the Department  
23 of State under the heading “Voluntary Contributions to  
24 International Organizations”, there are authorized to be  
25 appropriated \$30,000,000 for a United States contribu-

1 tion to the International Labor Organization for the ac-  
2 tivities of the International Program on the Elimination  
3 of Child Labor.

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