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Herger**
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Herger Lauds Passage of Measures Protecting Children

(WASHINGTON, DC) – Congressman Herger today supported S. 3525, the "Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006," and H.R. 4472, the "Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006." The House passed both measures. As Chairman of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources, Herger led the effort to pass S. 3525, which would reauthorize and strengthen programs aimed at protecting vulnerable children from abuse and neglect. Meanwhile, H.R. 4472 would help protect children from sex offenders. It includes an important child protection provision supported and pushed by the subcommittee Herger chairs. The provision would strengthen existing law governing who can qualify to be a foster or adoptive parent. Herger had the follow reaction to House passage of these measures:

"The Child and Family Services Improvement Act will encourage States to invest in effective services to ensure children are raised in safe, loving families," Herger stated. "I'm especially pleased this legislation targets new resources so more foster children are visited on a monthly basis. It is my sincere hope this increased monitoring will go a long way towards better protecting these vulnerable children and improving our nation's child protection programs."

The bill reauthorizes funding for these important programs for another five years, which will help ensure children are protected from abuse and neglect. A portion of the funds is also being targeted towards improving the frequency of caseworker visits to protect the safety and well being of children in foster care. The measure encourages states to invest federal funds in services that effectively assist at-risk families, protect children from abuse and neglect, and prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their parents.

Herger continued, "I also strongly support the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act. The murders of Jessica Lunsford and Sarah Lunde--both allegedly at the hands of convicted sex offenders--reminded all Americans of the need for tough laws that provide strict punishments for individuals convicted of child molestation. This measure does just that. I'm also pleased the bill includes a provision to better protect at risk children in foster and adoptive settings."

H.R. 4472 would: require states to maintain offender registries accessible on the Internet; direct the Justice Department to maintain a national database and make failure to register a felony; increase penalties for sexual offenses against children; and expand the use of DNA to identify and prosecute sex offenders. President Bush is expected to sign it into law this week.

For more information, log on to <http://www.house.gov/herger> on the Internet!

The following is the text of Congressman Herger's floor speech in support of the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006. Video and audio of it can be accessed at: <http://www.house.gov/herger/images/CWHFosterCare-7-25-6.rm>.

"Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 3525, as amended. As amended, this legislation reflects provisions as reported by the Committee on Ways and Means on June 29 and included in H.R. 5640, the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006. I'm pleased to be here with the gentleman from Washington who is a co-sponsor of this bipartisan legislation. I thank him for his work and leadership on this legislation. I'd also like to thank the many Members from both sides of the aisle for their support.

"Mr. Speaker, this legislation reauthorizes and improves numerous child protection programs that combined will provide about four billion dollars during the next five years to keep children safe and ensure they are raised in safe and loving families. These programs are the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program, the Child Welfare Services program, the Court Improvement program, and the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program.

"This legislation supports State efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect by keeping families together and preventing, whenever possible, the unnecessary separation of children from their families. For example, the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program provides resources for family support services, family preservation services, time-limited reunification services, and post-adoption services. We know that one of the best ways to give a child a chance of a bright future is to ensure that child is raised in a safe, loving family. The services supported by this legislation are targeted where they are needed most -- to help parents at-risk of abusing or neglecting their children, or to prevent repeated abuse and neglect.

"On May 23rd, the Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee which I chair held a hearing on this legislation. We heard from a broad array of voices in support of the extension of these programs, and the support of changes requiring States to focus resources more on services for children and at-risk families. Earlier this year, the President signed the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, which provided \$200 million in new funds for services to better protect children over the next five years. I am very pleased that this legislation targets these increased resources so more foster children are visited on a monthly basis. The Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General recently reported that these visits were not occurring. Only 20 States could tell whether caseworkers actually visited children in foster care on a monthly basis. In 7 of these 20 States, the reports found that fewer than half of the children in foster care were visited on a monthly basis.

"Research shows that children who are visited on a more frequent basis are more quickly placed in permanent homes and experience other positive outcomes compared to children not visited. Newspapers are frequently report the horrors of children neglected by the very system charged to protect them. The increased monitoring promoted by this bill makes sense and will go a long way towards better protecting these vulnerable children.

"Mr. Speaker, we still have more work to do to improve our nation's foster care program. Time and time again, we hear of children lingering in foster care, bounced from home to home. In some cases, foster children have lived in more than 50 homes. This is unacceptable and we will continue to work to improve this program so all children can live with a family that loves them. This legislation brings us one step closer to that important goal. It has widespread bipartisan support, and I urge all my colleagues to support it."

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