

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 6412

C 115 L 02
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Regulating disclosure of information by international matchmaking organizations.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Costa, Prentice, Winsley, Long, Keiser and Benton).

Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions
House Committee on Commerce & Labor

Background: According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, over 200 international matchmaking organizations operate in the United States. These organizations bring together approximately 4,000 to 6,000 couples yearly who marry and petition for immigration of the female spouse to the United States. This volume represents between 3 and 4 percent of the immigration of female spouses to this country and .4 percent of all immigration to the United States. Most of the female spouses come from the Philippines or from the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union.

The federal Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 provides that international matchmaking organizations doing business in the United States must provide accurate information about immigration laws to prospective female spouses in their native language.

There is concern that some prospective female spouses using matchmaking organizations may lack accurate information about their prospective husbands. Without this information, they may not be aware of a man's criminal history, and may enter into marriage with a potentially violent spouse.

Summary: International matchmaking organizations must notify prospective spouses in foreign countries that background checks and marital history information on prospective Washington spouses is available upon request. The notice that background check and marital history information is available upon request must be in the recruit's native language, and must be displayed in a manner that separates it from other information in lettering at least one-quarter of an inch high.

If a prospective spouse in a foreign country requests this information from the matchmaking organization, the organization must notify the Washington resident of the request. The Washington resident must obtain background check information from the State Patrol, and must provide this information, as well as marital history information, to the organization.

The organization must then provide the information to the prospective spouse in the foreign country. Organizations must refrain from knowingly providing any further services to either

prospective spouse until the organization has received the required information and provided it to the prospective foreign spouse.

Violations of these laws are considered violations of the Consumer Protection Act.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	43	2	
House	93	0	(House amended)
Senate	43	2	(Senate concurred)

Effective: September 1, 2002