

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESSB 6412

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As Passed Senate, February 15, 2002

**Title:** An act relating to international matchmaking organizations.

**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).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions: 1/29/02, 2/5/02 [DPS, DNP].

Passed Senate: 2/15/02, 43-2.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6412 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Keiser, Vice Chair; Fairley, Franklin, Gardner, Rasmussen, Regala and Winsley.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Hochstatter, Honeyford and West.

**Staff:** Elizabeth Mitchell (786-7430)

**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 of Bill:** 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. 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.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on September 1, 2002.

**Testimony For:** This bill will provide more information to women using international matchmaking organizations, and will help them to make a more informed choice about their prospective spouses. Women who use matchmaking services are typically extremely poor and can easily become victims of violent or controlling husbands. This bill is related to the larger issue of the trafficking industry, which is harmful to many people.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Rani Hong; Helen Clemente; Cherakris Amlag, Gabriela Network; Maria Gabriela Villareat, UW Women's Center.

**House Amendment(s):** 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.