

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SJM 8009

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As of February 20, 2009

**Brief Description:** Requesting the department of homeland security and congress to examine the federal T visa program.

**Sponsors:** Senators Kohl-Welles, Swecker, Holmquist, King, Keiser, Stevens, Franklin, Kline, Hargrove, Fraser, Prentice and Tom.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor, Commerce & Consumer Protection: 2/19/09.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Staff:** Kathleen Buchli (786-7488)

**Background:** Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, or receipt of people for the purposes of slavery, forced labor, and servitude. In its 2006 report to Congress, the United States Attorney General estimated that between 14,500 and 17,500 people are trafficked annually into the United States.

In 2000 the United States Congress passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000. The act created two nonimmigrant visas, the "T" and "U" visas, for victims of trafficking and for victims of certain serious crimes. T visas are available to individuals who are victims of "a severe form of trafficking in persons." Severe forms of trafficking include sex trafficking of persons under 18 years of age, or recruiting or obtaining persons for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion "for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery." Up to 5,000 T visas may be issued annually. From 2000 to 2008, approximately 1,100 T visas have been issued.

**Summary of Bill:** The Department of Homeland Security is requested to examine how to expedite the processing of T visa applications. Congress is requested to study the T visa program to determine why the rate of issuing T visas is low and what can be done to make it easier for eligible human trafficking victims to qualify.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: In the last six years only 1,100 T visas have been issued. It can take over a year to complete an application, and then it takes over three years to hear back after sending it in. In this state less than 100 T visas have been issued. There are severe problems in the issuing of these visas and they need to be solved.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Benita Gjurassic, Tronie Foundation.