

Pending Legislation, H.R. 1271, Will Deal a Crippling Blow to the War on Drugs and Crime

On April 18 the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee approved H.R. 1271, the "Family Privacy Protection Act." The House passed the bill by a vote of 418 to 7. The bill, which is part of the Contract with America, states that those seeking the participation of minors in a federally funded survey or questionnaire on sensitive issues (e.g., illegal and antisocial behavior, sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, privileged relationships) must obtain the **prior written consent** of a parent or guardian.

If this bill is passed by the full Senate as is, federally funded activities such as the following will be made impractical or extremely costly:

- Monitoring the Future, a national survey of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use among students in grades 8 through 12 that has been conducted since 1976.
- The National Survey of High School Students Regarding Firearms Ownership and Use.
- The Youth Risk Behavior Survey, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Studies of the links between drug use, violence, and crime among youth detained by the juvenile justice system, including the national Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) Program.
- School- and community-based assessments of the need for programs aimed at preventing gang activity, violence, and alcohol/drug abuse and evaluations of the effectiveness of such programs (e.g., D.A.R.E.).

The above types of studies, all of which are already conducted in compliance with stringent federal regulations for the protection of research participants, will be virtually impossible to conduct if researchers or school administrators must first contact and obtain the written permission of a large number of parents or guardians.

At a time when the country is determined to stop illegal drug use and violence among youth, it would be self-defeating for Congress--in the name of protecting families--to impede the collection of the very information that is needed to develop and evaluate programs that address drug use and crime among the nation's youth.

H.R. 1271 AVAILABLE ON CESAR'S HOME PAGE

A copy of H.R. 1271 is available on CESAR's World Wide Web home page, under the Legislation Conference of the CESAR BOARD. A copy of the bill is also available from CESAR.

<http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cesar/cesar.html>

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