

## [S. 802, Girls Count Act of 2015](#)

### FLOOR SITUATION

On Monday, June 1, 2015, the House will consider [S. 802](#), the *Girls Count Act of 2015*, under a suspension of the rules. S. 802 was introduced on March 19, 2015, by Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) and passed the Senate by [unanimous consent](#) on May 23, 2015.

### SUMMARY

S. 802 would authorize the Secretary of the Department of State and the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development to prioritize and advance ongoing efforts to improve birth registration programs, prevent discrimination against girls and women, and improve their property and inheritance rights.

The Secretary and Administrator would be authorized to coordinate with international organizations, civil society organizations, and the private sector in meeting those goals. The bill would also require the Secretary and Administrator, to the extent practicable, to include in their evaluations and reports to Congress detailed data about foreign assistance beneficiaries, descriptions of how assistance programs benefit girls, and specific information about programs that address the particular needs of girls.

The Act would sunset five years after the date of enactment.

### BACKGROUND

Birth registration establishes the existence of a child under law and is critical to ensuring that children are guaranteed their civil rights, have access to basic services, and do not fall victim to human trafficking and exploitation. Today, the births of nearly 36 percent of children under the age of five worldwide, or approximately 230 million children, many of whom are girls, have never been

recorded.<sup>1</sup> According to some, without an accurate birth certification process, the effectiveness of foreign assistance and domestic social welfare programs can be difficult to gauge.<sup>2</sup>

In 1989, the United Nation's General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child which became effective in 1990. 195 countries have since ratified the treaty, which addresses the rights of children worldwide.<sup>3</sup> Article 7 of the treaty states, among other things, that "a child has a right to be registered immediately after birth."<sup>4</sup> In an attempt to achieve the goal of the Convention, the United Nations Children's Fund has taken actions geared towards strengthening national child protection systems in order to reduce the obstacles of registering every child at birth. Actions in support of birth registration include legal and policy reform; civil registry strategic planning, capacity and public awareness building; the integration of birth registration into other services, such as health and education; community-based registration; and social mobilization campaigns.<sup>5</sup>

According to the bill sponsor, enacting the legislation would "bring us one step closer to making sure every child can be counted and able to fully participate in and contribute to their societies."<sup>6</sup>

S. 802 is similar to [H.R. 3398](#), which passed the House by [voice vote](#) on November 19, 2014. The Senate did not act on the House-passed bill in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. S. 802 is also identical to the text of H.R.2100, which passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee by voice vote in May of this year.

## **COST**

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) that implementing the reporting requirements would cost less than \$500,000 each year and total \$1 million over the 2016 to 2020 period, assuming the availability of appropriated funds. Pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply to this legislation because it would not affect direct spending or revenues.

## **STAFF CONTACT**

For questions or further information please contact [John Huston](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 6-5539.

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<sup>1</sup> See [UNICEF Report](#)

<sup>2</sup> S. 802, Section 2, Paragraph 8.

<sup>3</sup> See [CRS Report](#)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> See [UNICEF Report](#)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases?ID=03a64140-7b34-43f0-97b6-7021bc93d520>