

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6412

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions, February 5, 2002

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

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

**Sponsors:** 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].

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

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**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 Substitute Bill:** A person in Washington State who seeks the services of an international matchmaking organization must obtain a criminal background check from the State Patrol. The person must then forward this information, in addition to information about his or her marital history, to the matchmaking organization. The matchmaking organization must retain this information, inform prospective partners in other countries that the information is available, and must provide this information to prospective parties upon request. Information must be given in the prospective partner's native language.

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

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** Only state and not federal background check information is required. Organizations are required to make information available to recruits upon request instead of distributing it automatically. Marital history information, not marital status, is required. Marital history is defined, and applicants are required to affirm to organizations that their marital history information is complete and accurate. Personal jurisdiction for matchmaking organizations is specified. A September 1, 2002, effective date is added.

**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.