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Promoting Justice  
for Women & Girls  
Worldwide

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## **Historic Law Signed by President Bush to Prevent the Abuse of Foreign Women Through International Marriage Brokers**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.—January 5, 2006.** Today, President Bush signed into a law a historic bill that provides foreign women critical information to protect themselves from violent abuse by men they meet through international marriage brokers (IMBs) (commonly referred to as “mail-order bride” agencies).

The International Marriage Broker Regulation Act of 2005 (IMBRA), introduced by Senators Sam Brownback (R-KS) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Representatives Frank Wolf (R-VA) and Rick Larsen (D-WA) last Fall, was attached to the bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (HR 3402) that passed the Senate and House in December. IMBRA is a bipartisan, common sense bill that provides foreign women with information about the violent criminal history of their prospective American husbands, as well as about the rights and resources available to domestic violence victims in the United States. Through this law, foreign women will be given critical tools to protect themselves and their children from domestic violence.

The IMB industry has grown rapidly in response to increasing demand by some American men for foreign “subservient” wives. It is estimated that between 9,500 and 14,500 foreign fiancées enter the US every year as a result of IMB matches. The marketing practices of many IMBs attract predatory abusers with a history of violence against women and children. IMBs charge their American male clients significant fees to meet foreign women from developing countries who often are depicted as submissive and obedient. IMBs often market women as merchandise, with “satisfaction guaranteed” promises to their paying male clients and so-called “romance tours” that may herd several hundred women at a time to meet a dozen men. Also, agencies do not screen their male clients for violent histories, may repeatedly pair new women recruits with violent men, and frequently fail to advise – and may even mislead – women about what they can do to escape abuse.

As a consequence, foreign women and their children are being abused, sometimes murdered, by the men they meet through IMBs. The murders of Alla Barney in New Jersey (stabbed to death by her American husband in the parking lot of a Kindercare) and Susana Blackwell in Washington State (several months pregnant, she and two of her friends were shot to death in a courthouse by her American husband) underscore the urgent need for greater protection for foreign women who meet American men through this industry.

“The passage of IMBRA is a historic step towards protecting the thousands of foreign women who each year fall prey to predatory abusers who use IMBs to find their next victims.” Said Layli Miller-Muro, Executive Director of the Tahirih Justice Center, which assisted in developing the legislation.

***Through direct legal services and public policy advocacy, the Tahirih Justice Center works to protect immigrant women and girls seeking justice in the United States from gender-based violence. Please donate now at [www.tahirih.org](http://www.tahirih.org) and become our partners in the fight against the oppression of women and girls!***

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## FACT SHEET

The marriage broker industry has exploded in recent years, expanding over the Internet and through affiliates both at home and overseas. In 1999, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) estimated that over 200 US-based businesses paired 4,000-6,000 American men each year with foreign women, primarily from Asia and Eastern Europe. By 2004 those figures had more than doubled, and today women from every corner of the globe are marketed on IMB websites. *As many as one-half of the more than 28,000 foreign fiancé(e)s and many of the thousands of foreign spouses entering the United States each year may have met their American husbands through IMBs.*

*“In Russia, she doesn’t have a choice to stay home to take care of her husband, house, and children—for her, it is a dream. . . she is the weaker gender and knows it.” [www.chanceforlove.com](http://www.chanceforlove.com) (last visited 12/19/05)*

*“Welcome to Intimate Submissives®™, where Western Men can find sexy submissive Asian women . . . selected for their loyalty and zero tolerance for divorce. . . who want a man to serve and to please. . . .” ([www.submissives.net](http://www.submissives.net)) “Our registered trademark is: It’s Good to be the King!” ([www.submissives.net/order.htm](http://www.submissives.net/order.htm)) (last visited 12/19/05)*

*“Total cost for services: \$10,500.00 U.S. A beautiful woman to sleep with at night, kiss in the morning, and love all day long, for so little – less than an economy car.” [www.armcandyinternational.com](http://www.armcandyinternational.com) (last visited 12/19/05)*

IMBs provide extensive information to their male clients about the women profiled, and the men meet the women and their families in their home countries. In contrast, the women generally learn only what the men choose to share, and have no way to verify what they are told.

IMBRA provides foreign women with information they need to make informed choices for themselves and their children. Specifically, the Act:

- Prohibits an IMB from profiling girls under the age of 18;
- Requires IMBs, before they release the contact information of any foreign woman to any U.S. client to (1) conduct a search of federal and state public sex offender registries for information on that client; (2) provide her with a copy of the results of that search as well as further criminal and marital background information the IMB has collected directly from the U.S. client; (3) advise her of the rights and resources available to domestic violence victims in the U.S.; and (4) obtain her written consent to the release of her contact information to that specific U.S. client;
- Requires that the criminal background check information that the Department of Homeland Security already collects on Americans petitioning for a foreign fiancée or spousal visa be shared with the foreign fiancée or spouse;
- Requires foreign fiancées and spouses coming to the U.S. to be given an informational pamphlet reviewing the rights and resources available to domestic violence victims in the U.S; and
- Halts the practice of Americans simultaneously seeking visas for multiple fiancées and provides a lifetime cap of two fiancée visas per U.S. petitioner (subject to DHS waiver).