

## HOW TO KILL THE ANTI-ABORTION CLAUSE OF THE TRAFFICKING BILL March 19, 2015

Senate Republicans are now playing hide and seek with victims of sex trafficking.

The U.S. Department of Justice now estimates that approximately 300,000 American children are at risk of being prostituted in the U.S.—at an average age of 13-14.

The Survivors of Human Trafficking Survivors Bill, now before the Senate as S.178, aims to fight this menace by prosecuting traffickers, fining them, and using the fines to aid their victims. But the bill is stalled because Senate Republicans have tucked into it—or reportedly tucked into it—a reference to the Hyde Amendment of 1977, which bars the use of federal funds for abortion except in cases of rape or incest.

When I say that this anti-abortion provision is “reportedly” tucked into the anti-trafficking bill, I mean just that. If you call up the full 68-page text of the bill

([http://dyn.realclearpolitics.com/congressional\\_bill\\_tracker/bill/114/s178/is](http://dyn.realclearpolitics.com/congressional_bill_tracker/bill/114/s178/is)) and do a digital search for “abortion,” you won’t find the word anywhere. Nor will you find “Hyde Amendment” or even “1977.” You’d sooner find a lost penny at midnight in the Great Dismal Swamp.

Yet Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-TX), a sponsor of the bill, cannot understand how Senate Democrats could have failed to see the anti-abortion provision lurking within its impenetrably dense verbiage. He told reporters it's "just preposterous" for Democrats to "wake from their slumbers and say, 'you snuck this in the bill.'" Yes, Senator: about as preposterous as saying that you really wanted them to see it all along.

So now that the Democrats are filibustering the bill and the Republicans are clinging like leeches to its anti-abortion clause (wherever the hell it lurks in there), this desperately needed lifeline for victims of sex

trafficking seems doomed. But is it really? What if we could kill the anti-abortion clause—nullify its effectiveness—without even yanking it out of the bill?

Here's how.

Section 4 of the pending bill amends Section 203 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2005 by authorizing the Attorney General to “award block grants to an eligible entity” to help prosecute traffickers as well as working “to rescue and restore the lives of [their] victims.”

Under subsection k.4 of this section, “the term ‘eligible entity’ means a State or unit of local government that—

(D) provides an assurance that . . .  
a victim of child human trafficking shall not be required to collaborate with law enforcement officers to have access to any shelter or services provided with a grant under this section.

If I were a Democratic senator, or any Senator who truly cares about rescuing and restoring the life of a victim of sex trafficking, I would move a small amendment to the above passage so that it reads as follows:

(D) provides an assurance that . . .  
a victim of child human trafficking shall **BE CONSIDERED IPSO FACTO A VICTIM OF RAPE AND SHALL** not be required to collaborate with law enforcement officers to have access to any shelter or services provided with a grant under this section.

With this amendment, no child victim of sex trafficking could be denied federal funds for an abortion because those funds cannot be denied to a victim of rape.

If Republican Senators would oppose this amendment, are they ready to argue that a child coerced into prostitution-- forced to have sex again and again with any number of strange men--has not been raped? Or that such a child SHOULD be “required to collaborate with law enforcement officers” to prove that he or she has been raped rather than freely choosing a life of prostitution?

The only way to break the impasse over this bill is make every Senator answer that question.