

CALIFORNIA REFORM SEX OFFENDER LAWS (CA RSOL)
8721 Santa Monica Boulevard, Box 855
Los Angeles, CA 90069
(805) 896-7854

August 5, 2013

Chairman Ed Royce
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Royce:

The purpose of this letter is to request the removal of a provision incorporated within the U.S. State Department authorization bill, H.R. 2848, that would restrict the passports of U.S. citizens who have been convicted of a sex offense. The provision was offered by Rep. Chris Smith and accepted by members of the Foreign Affairs Committee on August 1.

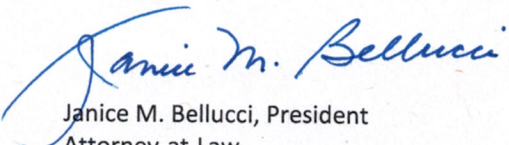
California Reform Sex Offender Laws (CA RSOL) strongly opposes this provision because it violates the constitutional rights of more than 750,000 citizens of the United States of America. That's right! Today there are more than 750,000 U.S. citizens who are labeled as "sex offenders" and that number continues to grow daily.

The label "sex offender" is broad and includes individuals whose offenses were not violent and did not include another human being. For example, there are sex offenders who urinated in an alley behind a sports bar, who "streaked" at a college football game and who sent a "sext" message to a loved one. There are also sex offenders who had consensual sex as a teenager with another teenager. Because states like California – your home state -- require a sex offender to register for life, hundreds of thousands of sex offenders who have not harmed another person, much less a child, could be restricted for life from traveling abroad if the current provision remains a part of H.R. 2848.

More time is needed to carefully craft a provision that would both protect children and maintain the constitutional right of U.S. citizens to travel abroad. Additional time would allow the Foreign Affairs Committee to become educated on this complex topic which, contrary to some media reports, includes extremely low rates of re-offense. For example, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation reported last year that the rate of re-offense for a sex offender is only 1.9 percent. An across-the-board passport restriction on all sex offenders could result in a violation of the constitutional rights of more than 98 percent of those currently labeled as sex offenders.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We are available to answer any questions you or your staff may have. Additional information about CA RSOL, a statewide non-profit organization, is available online at www.californiarsol.org.

Sincerely,


Janice M. Bellucci, President
Attorney-at-Law