

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Majority staff report: U.S. immigration loopholes and child marriages

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, released a majority staff report Friday titled, “How the U.S. Immigration System Encourages Child Marriages.” The report presents the findings of a yearlong bipartisan inquiry by the staff of Chairman Johnson and former Ranking Member Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.).

“U.S. law and U.S. Department of State policy aim to prevent and reduce the risks of child marriages occurring around the world, yet major loopholes in U.S. law have allowed thousands of minors to be subjected to child marriages,” the committee’s report states. “Under the Immigration and Nationality Act (“INA”), a U.S. child may petition for a visa for a spouse or fiancé living in another country, and a U.S. adult may petition for a visa for a minor spouse or fiancé living abroad.”

The report can be found [here](#). Data provided by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services referenced in the report can be found [here](#).

Key findings of the report:

- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) approved immigration petitions for 8,686 spouses and fiancée in marriages involving minors from FY2007 to FY2017. In 95 percent of the cases, the younger person was a girl.
- USCIS awarded petitions to people with significant age differences, including a 71-year-old U.S. citizen’s petition for a 17-year-old spouse from Guatemala and

a 14-year-old's petition for a 48-year-old spouse from Jamaica. USCIS approved 149 petitions involving a minor with an adult spouse or fiancé who was more than 40 years old.

- USCIS awarded green cards to 4,749 minors in the United States on spousal or fiancé visas, allowing them to adjust status to become lawful permanent residents from FY2007 to FY2017.

The report also details weaknesses in USCIS's management and administration of spousal and fiancé immigration petitions that leave minors vulnerable to fraud, child exploitation, trafficking, and forced marriages.