

What is the Children Don't Belong on Tobacco Farms Act?

The Children Don't Belong on Tobacco Farms Act (S.974/ H.R. 5327), introduced by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Representative David Cicilline (D-RI), is legislation that would effectively ban the use of child labor on tobacco farms in the United States. The bill was introduced on July 31st, 2014.



Why is the Children Don't Belong on Tobacco Farms Act necessary?

Today, child labor is alive and well on tobacco farms in the United States. A recent report from Human Rights Watch reveals that in Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina, children as young as 7-years-old are working in tobacco fields for major tobacco companies. Many of these children work grueling shifts that can be more than ten hours long, and are subject to unsafe conditions like physically taxing work, use of sharp tools, and extended exposure to tobacco leaves. Worse yet, many children exhibit symptoms of acute nicotine poisoning, including nausea, dizziness, and vomiting. Some children also reported basic safety violations, such as being prohibited from taking time off to drink water. The Children Don't Belong on Tobacco Farms Act would ban this kind of labor for children under 18, helping to insure the health, safety, and overall well-being of child laborers.

What does the Children Don't Belong on Tobacco Farms Act do?

Current law under the Fair Labor Standards Act fails to apply equal restrictions to child labor in agriculture while it highly regulates child labor in virtually all other industries. The Children Don't Belong on Tobacco Farms Act amend the Fair Labor Standards Act to define any employment by children under 18 in a profession that involves direct contact with tobacco as "particularly hazardous oppressive child labor."

Ensuring better lives for our child workers

Every child in America deserves to grow up in an environment that fosters learning and personal growth, including children working in agriculture. Unfortunately, when children are exposed to the harsh conditions of tobacco labor, they are subject to potentially life-long consequences to their health and development. Ending child tobacco labor is an important first step in improving the lives of child farmworkers.