

## Q&A: SAVE Child Support Act

Written by Grassley Press  
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**Q:** What role does the federal government have in making sure parents meet child support obligations?

**A:** The states enforce child support laws. Since 1975, the federal government has provided funds directly to states to supplement their enforcement efforts and, more recently, to help protect relationships with non-custodial parents. State family courts determine the amount of child support that noncustodial parents must pay and visitation rights. Collecting child support can be a problematic and lengthy process. In fiscal 2010, only 62 percent of child support obligations were collected. Some noncustodial parents encounter difficulty in exercising their visitation rights. That's not right, and I want to make sure these court-determined parental rights are honored.

Because federal tax dollars are involved in enforcement and uncollected child support can lead to more people relying on federal welfare benefits, I've introduced bipartisan legislation that would give states support and flexibility to help make sure custodial parents receive court-ordered payments. The bill I sponsored with Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey also would help to make sure that noncustodial parents retain court-approved access to their children. This bill does not change the court processes or decisions in determining who owes what but simply provides additional tools for states to recover money that family courts have already determined is owed. Budgets are tight for individuals, families, states and the federal government. Receipt of child support payments can help families remain independent and off government assistance.

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**Q:** How does your bill – the Strengthen and Vitalize Enforcement, or SAVE, Child Support Act – help states ensure that custodial parents receive support payments and noncustodial parents retain access to their children?

**A:** Our bill gives states access to a child support lien registry so that liens placed against property because of overdue child support can be easily found regardless of state residency. It strengthens the procedures by which passports and certain licenses and permits can be revoked by requiring greater coordination between child support agencies and license-issuing agencies, and it stipulates that a passport can be restored only after complete repayment of arrears. The bill also makes it easier for states to intercept payments made to individuals in order to satisfy child support orders by requiring automated data matches with state child support agencies. And, it encourages state child support agencies to coordinate with state correction agencies to assist individuals with a support order to manage and fulfill their obligations.

This bill cuts down on the deceptive and harassing collection practices that some noncustodial parents have endured by making private child support collection companies subject to regulation and enforcement by the Federal Trade Commission. And, it would help noncustodial parents exercise their court-approved visitation rights by requiring state child support agencies to report information to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on how the state's child support enforcement plan facilitates access to and visitation of children by noncustodial parents.

**Q:** Why is this bill necessary?

**A:** There is a backlog of more than \$100 billion in owed child support. Without the support of the noncustodial parent, many children will enter poverty or become dependent on state and federal government assistance. Passage of the SAVE Child Support Act could help many families stay independent, thereby saving the taxpayers money. During this time of record debt and deficits, we can protect scarce federal resources by helping to make sure parents are meeting their court-mandated obligations.

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