

GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

Governmental Affairs Office

740 Fifteenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005-1022
(202) 662-1760
FAX: (202) 662-1762

DIRECTOR
Robert D. Evans
(202) 662-1765

rdevans@staff.abanet.org

SENIOR LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL
Denise A. Cardman
(202) 662-1761
cardmand@staff.abanet.org

Kevin J. Driscoll
(202) 662-1766
driscollk@staff.abanet.org

Lillian B. Gaskin
(202) 662-1768
gaskinl@staff.abanet.org

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL
R. Larson Frisby
(202) 662-1098
frisbyr@staff.abanet.org

Kristi Gaines
(202) 662-1763
gainesk@staff.abanet.org

Kenneth J. Goldsmith
(202) 662-1789
goldsmithk@staff.abanet.org

Ellen McBarnette
(202) 662-1767
mcbarnee@staff.abanet.org

E. Bruce Nicholson
(202) 662-1769
nicholsonb@staff.abanet.org

DIRECTOR GRASSROOTS
OPERATIONS/LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL
Julie M. Strandlie
(202) 662-1764
strandlj@staff.abanet.org

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
LAW CONSULTANT
Hayden Gregory
(202) 662-1772
gregoryh@staff.abanet.org

STATE LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL
Rita C. Aguilar
(202) 662-1780
aguilarr@staff.abanet.org

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
Julie Pasatiempo
(202) 662-1776
jpasatiempo@staff.abanet.org

STAFF DIRECTOR FOR
INFORMATION SERVICES
Sharon Greene
(202) 662-1014
greenes@staff.abanet.org

EDITOR WASHINGTON LETTER
Rhonda J. McMillion
(202) 662-1017
mcmillionr@staff.abanet.org

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Dear Senator:

I am writing on behalf of the American Bar Association to express our strong support for S. 3182, the Adoption Promotion Act of 2003. The proposed Act will strengthen and improve programs that have helped an extraordinarily large number of children to find permanent homes through adoption, and we urge your support for it.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) rewarded states with cash incentives for increasing the number of adoptions of children in foster care, concentrating on children with special needs. Adoption levels were on the rise before the enactment of ASFA, but grew significantly faster as its programs were implemented. Since 1997, the number of adoptions of children from foster care increased by 64 percent, and the number of adoptions of children with special needs increased by 63 percent, a development that has heartened advocates for children and adoption nationwide. But over 500,000 children are today in foster care, and 126,000 have adoption as a goal.

S. 3182 would reauthorize and expand on the adoption bonuses created as part of ASFA. It would reauthorize incentive payments for increased adoptions of foster children and for increased adoption of children with special needs. It will add new incentives for states to increase adoptions of children over the age of 9, who represent almost half of the children waiting for adoption. It will make a profound difference in bringing about more adoptions of these children.

The House of Representatives approved an identical bill without opposition by voice vote on October 8, 2003. The ABA joins with bipartisan supporters of S. 3182 in the realistic goal of strengthening adoption of special needs and older children and urges the Senate to take prompt action on this much-needed legislation.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Evans