

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

January 18, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC

Dear President Obama,

We write to express our deep disappointment regarding the Russian government's recent decision to ban all adoptions of Russian children by American families and to request your assistance in engaging with Russia to complete intercountry adoption cases initiated prior to the ban's enactment. Unparented children have no political power or voice, so it falls to us and others to speak on their behalf. This misguided Russian law victimizes thousands of vulnerable Russian children who are now living in dismal conditions in Russian institutions, with little hope of a permanent family except through intercountry adoption.

Russia's own Ministry of Science and Education estimates today that 110,000 children in Russia live in institutions, many of whom have special needs that these orphanages cannot begin to assist. As you know, long-term institutionalization has been proven to lead to neurological and emotional difficulties in children, as the lack of parental bonding damages brain development and a child's ability to form meaningful relationships with others. Russian families adopt about 7,400 of these institutionalized children each year and, until January 1, 2013, American families were opening their hearts and homes to about 1,000 Russian children each year as well.

While concrete numbers are difficult to ascertain due to privacy laws, current estimates from the Department of State and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services indicate that there are 350 to 500 active adoption cases involving Russian children matched with U.S. families prior to the recently enacted Russian ban. News reports suggest that of these cases, more than 50 have already been approved by Russian courts, meaning that the adoption is already legally recognized within Russia. Many of the matched families are desperately calling

our offices asking for help. One such family has already completed the adoption of a 5-year-old girl with spina bifida, only to discover that, even though they have a valid Russian adoption decree, they now cannot bring her home. Another planned to adopt two little boys abandoned as infants in Vladivostok, one of whom has a cleft palate. The American adoptive parents just spent two weeks with the boys, and the future they planned as a family is now blocked. These families, and hundreds of others, already love these children like their own, yet they are now precluded by Russian law from continuing with their cases.

Mr. President, we must immediately find a way forward for the Russian orphans and American families who are caught in this political conundrum. Although we believe that the entire law, which senselessly victimizes unparented children, should be reversed, our first priority must be to ensure that children and families who have already come together and been matched will not be torn apart. We ask you, as a father and a man who cares deeply about the well-being of children, to make this issue a priority in our bilateral relationship with Russia in your personal dealings with President Putin, and to instruct our nation's diplomats to raise it with Russian officials at all levels of government.

Sincerely,

Ray Blunt

Jim McClellan

Michael Bachmann

Steve Amodeo

Barbara Mikulski

Paul Vitter

Jeanne Shaheen

Mark R. Lautenberg

Jack Reed

Sheldon Brown

Chris Coons

John Cornyn

Clayton Kiewit

Paul Cohen

Pat Roberts

Chuck Grassley

John Boozman

Tom Harkin

John Warner

Allyson

Kent Hanks

Tom Coburn

Mark R. Warner

Jeff Sessions

Michael B. Eni

Bob

Karen Bass

Jim Moran

Rebekah Starnow

Anna Kolopchan

Mr. K

Maria Constance

Ray Wyden

Al Franken

Daniel Lipinski

Ray Dwyer

Fabrizio Leidy

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Jerry Moran

Bob Casey, Jr.

Bill Nelson

Quinn Snow

Steve King 14-04

Hank Jensen

Harold Wagon

Rail W. Hildner

Bob Goodlatte

BRANT HOGGS

Robbing

Charles B. Rangel

Sam Jones

Bill Josten

McWayne Muller

Martha Roby

Cynthia P. Sumner

Kat Tilner

Peter Proxman

Brett Guthrie

Barbara Lee

Debra L. Lundy

Dave Lusk

John F. Tierney

Andy

Ti B

Alan Hummel

Andy

Tom Marino

Erik Paulsen

Jim Langevin

Bob Doss

Janet Lehr