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(Original Signature of Member)

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R.

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To require the Comptroller General of the United States to carry out a study on how virtual currencies and online marketplaces are used to buy, sell, or facilitate the financing of goods or services associated with sex trafficking or drug trafficking, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. VARGAS introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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# A BILL

To require the Comptroller General of the United States to carry out a study on how virtual currencies and online marketplaces are used to buy, sell, or facilitate the financing of goods or services associated with sex trafficking or drug trafficking, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Fight Illicit Networks  
5 and Detect Trafficking Act” or the “FIND Trafficking  
6 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 The Congress finds the following:

3 (1) According to the Drug Enforcement Admin-  
4 istration (DEA) 2017 National Drug Threat Assess-  
5 ment, transnational criminal organizations are in-  
6 creasingly using virtual currencies.

7 (2) In its 2015 National Money Laundering  
8 Risk Assessment, the Department of the Treasury  
9 concluded: “The development of virtual currencies is  
10 an attempt to meet a legitimate market demand. Ac-  
11 cording to a Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago econ-  
12 omist, United States consumers want payment op-  
13 tions that are versatile and that provide immediate  
14 finality. No United States payment method meets  
15 that description, although cash may come closest.  
16 Virtual currencies can mimic cash’s immediate final-  
17 ity and anonymity and are more versatile than cash  
18 for online and cross-border transactions, making vir-  
19 tual currencies vulnerable for illicit transactions.”.

20 (3) Virtual currencies have become a prominent  
21 method to pay for goods and services associated with  
22 illegal sex trafficking and drug trafficking, which are  
23 two of the most detrimental and troubling illegal ac-  
24 tivities facilitated by online marketplaces.

25 (4) Online marketplaces, including the dark  
26 web, have become a prominent platform to buy, sell,

1 and advertise for illicit goods and services associated  
2 with sex trafficking and drug trafficking.

3 (5) According to the International Labour Or-  
4 ganization, in 2016, 4.8 million people in the world  
5 were victims of forced sexual exploitation, and in  
6 2014, the global profit from commercial sexual ex-  
7 ploitation was \$99 billion.

8 (6) In 2016, within the United States, the Cen-  
9 ter for Disease Control estimated that there were  
10 64,000 deaths related to drug overdose, and the  
11 most severe increase in drug overdoses were those  
12 associated with fentanyl and fentanyl analogs (syn-  
13 thetic opioids), which amounted to over 20,000 over-  
14 dose deaths.

15 (7) According to the United States Department  
16 of the Treasury 2015 National Money Laundering  
17 Risk Assessment, an estimated \$64 billion is gen-  
18 erated annually from United States drug trafficking  
19 sales.

20 (8) Illegal fentanyl in the United States origi-  
21 nates primarily from China, and it is readily avail-  
22 able to purchase through online marketplaces.

23 **SEC. 3. GAO STUDY.**

24 (a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Comptroller General of  
25 the United States shall conduct a study on how virtual

1 currencies and online marketplaces are used to facilitate  
2 sex and drug trafficking. The study shall consider—

3           (1) how online marketplaces, including the dark  
4 web, are being used as platforms to buy, sell, or fa-  
5 cilitate the financing of goods or services associated  
6 with sex trafficking or drug trafficking (specifically,  
7 opioids and synthetic opioids, including fentanyl,  
8 fentanyl analogs, and any precursor chemicals asso-  
9 ciated with manufacturing fentanyl or fentanyl  
10 analogs) destined for, originating from, or within the  
11 United States;

12           (2) how financial payment methods, including  
13 virtual currencies and peer-to-peer mobile payment  
14 services, are being utilized by online marketplaces to  
15 facilitate the buying, selling, or financing of goods  
16 and services associated with sex or drug trafficking  
17 destined for, originating from, or within the United  
18 States;

19           (3) how virtual currencies are being used to fa-  
20 cilitate the buying, selling, or financing of goods and  
21 services associated with sex or drug trafficking, des-  
22 tined for, originating from, or within the United  
23 States, when an online platform is not otherwise in-  
24 volved;

1 (4) how illicit funds that have been transmitted  
2 online and through virtual currencies are repatriated  
3 into the formal banking system of the United States  
4 through money laundering or other means;

5 (5) the participants (state and non-state actors)  
6 throughout the entire supply chain that participate  
7 in the buying, selling, or financing of goods and  
8 services associated with sex or drug trafficking  
9 (through online marketplaces or virtual currencies)  
10 destined for, originating from, or within the United  
11 States;

12 (6) Federal and State agency efforts to impede  
13 the buying, selling, or financing of goods and serv-  
14 ices associated with sex or drug trafficking through  
15 online marketplaces or virtual currencies that are  
16 destined for, originating from, or within the United  
17 States, including efforts to prevent the proceeds  
18 from sex or drug trafficking from entering the  
19 United States banking system through online mar-  
20 ketplaces or virtual currencies; and

21 (7) to what extent can the immutable and  
22 traceable nature of virtual currencies contribute to  
23 the tracking and prosecution of illicit funding.

24 (b) SCOPE.—For the purposes of the study required  
25 under subsection (a), the term “sex trafficking” means the

1 recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtain-  
2 ing, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose  
3 of a commercial sex act that is induced by force, fraud,  
4 or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform  
5 such act has not attained 18 years of age.

6 (c) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 1 year  
7 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller  
8 General of the United States shall submit to the Com-  
9 mittee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the  
10 Senate and the Committee on Financial Services of the  
11 House of Representatives a report summarizing the re-  
12 sults of the study required under subsection (a), together  
13 with any recommendations for legislative or regulatory ac-  
14 tion that would improve the efforts of Federal agencies  
15 to impede the use of virtual currencies and online market-  
16 places in facilitating sex and drug trafficking.