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REPRESENTATIVES; DOCUMENT NO.
1661; LEGISLATION
AFFECTING CHILDREN IN THE DISTRICT
OF COLUMBIA. LETTER FROM THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL; MARCH 3, 1915.**

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VARIOUS

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Bill 36

65th CONGRESS }
3d Session }

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

{ DOCUMENT
{ No. 1661

LEGISLATION
AFFECTING CHILDREN IN THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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LETTER FROM
THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

TRANSMITTING

SUPPLEMENT TO ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ATTORNEY
GENERAL FOR THE YEAR 1914, EMBODYING FIRST REPORT
OF COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
TO STUDY NEED FOR LEGISLATION AFFECTING CHILDREN
IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, INCLUDING DRAFTS
OF NEW JUVENILE COURT LAWS

Committee to Study need
for Legislation Affecting
Children in the Dist of Col



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MARCH 3, 1915.—Referred to the Committee on the District of Columbia
and ordered to be printed

WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL,
Washington, D. C., February 26, 1915.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith a supplement to my annual report to Congress for the fiscal year 1914, embodying the first report of the committee appointed to study the need for legislation affecting children in the District of Columbia, including drafts of new juvenile court laws.

Very respectfully,

T. W. GREGORY,
Attorney General.

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SUPPLEMENT TO
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,
Washington, D. C., February 13, 1915.

*To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States
of America in Congress assembled:*

In my annual report to you for the year 1914 I made the following statement:

“Impressed with the importance of considering the question of the amendment, revision, and codification of the laws in force in the District of Columbia pertaining to children and to the jurisdiction, practice, and procedure of the juvenile court of the District, my predecessor, on March 6, 1914, appointed a committee composed of Bernard Flexner, of Chicago, chairman; Miss Julia C. Lathrop, chief of the Children’s Bureau, Department of Labor; Rev. William J. Kerby, professor of sociology, Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.; Walter C. Clephane, Washington, D. C.; and William H. Baldwin, Washington, D. C., to study the present laws and needs of the District in this particular and to advise the Attorney General, accompanying its report with a draft of a code adequate to give the District satisfactory laws upon these subjects, and which might be used as a general model. This committee, acting without compensation, has held frequent meetings, and I am advised that its report will be ready at an early date.

“I am of the opinion that the present juvenile laws of the District of Columbia are antiquated. Copies of the report of the committee and of the proposed revision of the juvenile code will be transmitted to Congress with the hope that they may have your very earnest consideration.”

I now have and am transmitting herewith the report of the committee referred to, including drafts of two bills intended to carry out its recommendations. I have carefully gone over this report, and it meets with my entire approval. I earnestly urge its consideration at as early a date as circumstances permit.

Please treat this as a supplement to my last annual report.

T. W. GREGORY,
Attorney General.

**REPORT TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF A COMMITTEE APPOINTED
TO STUDY THE NEED FOR LEGISLATION AFFECTING CHILDREN IN
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.**

JANUARY 15, 1915.

SIR: Under date of March 6, 1914, the following letter was addressed to each member of this committee:

Intending soon to take under consideration the question of the amendment, revision, and codification of the laws in force in the District of Columbia pertaining to children and to the jurisdiction, practice, and procedure of the juvenile court of the District, I have the honor to request you to serve on a committee composed of Bernard Flexner, chairman; Miss Julia C. Lathrop, Rev. Dr. William J. Kerby, Walter C. Clephane, Esq., and William H. Baldwin, Esq., to study the present laws and the needs of the District in this particular, and to advise me in the premises, accompanying your report, if you will, with a draft of such a code as the committee believes would give the District satisfactory laws upon these subjects.

Hoping that you may be willing to serve in this capacity and without compensation, I am,

Respectfully, yours,

J. C. McREYNOLDS,
Attorney General.

The committee therein named was in the midst of its labors at the time you assumed office, and, at your request, has continued the work it had in hand. It respectfully submits herewith its report:

1. In the letter of appointment, it will be observed, the committee was asked to study:

(a) The laws in force in the District of Columbia pertaining to children;

(b) The jurisdiction, practice, and procedure of the juvenile court of the District of Columbia; and

(c) To make such recommendations in these matters as, in the opinion of the committee, would give the District of Columbia satisfactory laws upon the subject.

2. In pursuance of the work thus put before it, the committee made a compilation of all the existing laws relating to children in the District, so that it might be informed as to the development and operation of these laws, and as to how far any revision was needed.

It also secured a list of all children's institutions or agencies in the District, and, by means of a brief but comprehensive questionnaire calling for annual reports and for the facts as to the organization and connection, if any, of each of these with the Government, collected the data needed for taking a comprehensive view of the whole field, and of the relations of each of these institutions and agencies to the others and to the Government.

While this survey revealed certain obvious problems and needs, as, for example, that the District has no provision for feeble-minded and epileptic persons, and that institutional care for delinquent white girls and for the slighter offenses of delinquent boys is lacking, the most apparent and urgent need was a revision of the present juvenile court law, to which reference had been specially made in the letter

of appointment. The reasons for this will appear in the discussion of this particular subject later.

It soon became apparent that a plan for providing adequately for all case of neglected and defective children in the District would require not only careful study of the local situation, but also of the latest and best methods in use in other communities. In the meantime the juvenile court is treating the cases of neglected and defective children and, owing to the defects in the law, is working injustice upon them. The committee, therefore, felt it a duty to submit a report on this phase of the problem in order to avoid the delay which further study of the whole question would necessitate. It regards a prompt revision of the juvenile court law as imperative.

3. Accompanying this report, and part hereof, are the drafts of two bills:

(a) A bill amending the present juvenile court law and in fact creating a new juvenile court.

(b) A bill intended to remove certain disabilities affecting children by reason of judgments of conviction of crime of record against them in the juvenile court of the District.

The committee presents these measures in the hope that they will be introduced in the Congress and passed as drawn. A discussion of their merits involves primarily a consideration of the existing law and the results obtained under it.

THE EXISTING JUVENILE COURT.

The juvenile court of the District of Columbia was established by an act of Congress approved March 19, 1906. (34 Stat. L., p. 73.)

The court as established was and is essentially a police court for children; it has original and exclusive jurisdiction of all crimes and offenses of persons under 17 years of age hereafter committed against the United States not capital