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August 14, 2025

Rumors of Lowering the Country's Legal Marriage Age to 14 Debunked — What's Really Happening

Falls Church, VA — **Tahirih Justice Center Public Policy Manager Alex Goyette** addresses a harmful rumor being spread on social media: that there is an attempt by the President to use federal power to lower the legal age of marriage to 14 across the country. **This is false.**

“It is critical to correct the record on this so that individuals at risk and survivors know the truth,” said Goyette. “The truth is: since 2016, a nonpartisan, national movement has delivered laws restricting child marriage in 36 states, three territories, and Washington, DC. And 16 of those states, two of those territories and Washington, DC have banned child marriage entirely: DE, NJ, PA, MN, RI, NY, MA, VT, CT, MI, WA, VA, NH, MO, ME, OR, plus Washington, DC, American Samoa, and U.S. Virgin Islands.”

The Facts

1. **No proposal exists to lower the legal marriage age to 14.** The rumor falsely claims that state legislatures in Missouri, New Hampshire, West Virginia, and Wyoming have drafted laws to allow 14-year-olds to marry. There's no evidence or pending legislation that we have seen, in any of these states, to support that claim. In fact, Missouri and New Hampshire both banned child marriage effective 2025. Reforms passed in both West Virginia and Wyoming in 2023 set minimum marriage ages of 16 in those states, which previously had no minimum age.
2. **No federal policy is being enacted to lower the age of consent for marriage.** The federal government cannot raise or lower the marriage age. This is the legal purview of the states. Fact-checking sources have found no basis for this claim.
3. **No political party has a monopoly on this movement.** Child marriage bans consistently win bipartisan support and have also been opposed or stalled by lawmakers of both parties. Bans on child marriage have passed and failed in states led by Democrats and Republicans. The most dangerous state laws, which set no minimum marriage age at all, are present in both blue and red states: California, Mississippi, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.
4. **States are making progress.** Over the past few years, many states have enacted laws **banning** child marriage entirely, by raising the minimum marriage age to 18 with no exceptions, including several of the states that were mentioned in the rumor.

5. **Congress has made ending child marriage in the United States and abroad a priority.** Last year, senators in Congress introduced the *Child Marriage Prevention Act*, which brings bold action to address this form of child abuse. This legislation would incentivize states to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18, prohibit child marriage on federal lands, and strengthen immigration laws to prevent the trafficking of child brides into the United States and to prevent American children from being married solely for immigration purposes. There are plans for reintroduction soon.
6. **The movement to end child marriage has made incredible progress across states of every political persuasion.** Since 2016, bans on child marriage have been championed and supported by moderates, conservative Republicans, progressive Democrats, and everyone in between – often working across the aisle in partnership to protect children from the harms of forced marriage. By keeping survivor advocates at the heart of this movement we can and will end child marriage across the United States.

For more information, please check out: <https://www.tahirih.org/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/child-marriage-policy/>

About Alex Goyette

Alex Goyette is the Public Policy Manager at the **Tahirih Justice Center**, a national advocacy organization working to end child and forced marriage and to protect the rights of vulnerable individuals.

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