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## **In Moscow, National Council For Adoption Conducts High-Level Meetings with Russian Adoption Officials: Moratorium Avoided**

September 12, 2005, Alexandria, VA – On Friday, September 9, the Russian Duma defeated an amendment to impose a moratorium on adoptions of Russian orphans by American parents. The vote was a culmination of months of advocacy by nationalistic opponents of intercountry adoption who exploited the tragic deaths of Russian-born children reportedly at the hands of their adoptive parents. “Russian orphans have won an important vote,” said National Council For Adoption President Thomas Atwood, in Moscow. “The Russian Duma and other Russian adoption leaders have made it clear with this vote that adoptions will move forward and the interests of innocent children should not be made into a political football.”

Leading up to the vote, a National Council For Adoption delegation was in Moscow appealing directly to leaders at the highest levels of the Russian child welfare system. In an unprecedented atmosphere of cooperation, Russian and American adoption leaders agreed on many areas of reform, discussed positive alternatives to a shutdown of adoptions, and expressed a bilateral commitment to serving the needs of the estimated 700,000 children currently languishing in orphanages across the vast country.

“The adoption communities of both countries and all who are sincerely concerned about the future of Russian orphans should be very encouraged by what we have accomplished here,” commented Atwood following the talks. “Now that the Duma has rejected a shutdown, we can work together to achieve positive changes. We don’t need to shut down all adoptions in order to protect children better.”

The most critical, and possibly most productive, meeting was with Sergey Fridinsky, Deputy Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation. Mr. Fridinsky communicated frankly with the NCFA delegation in addressing the serious concerns of the Russian people regarding the tragic deaths and current adoption processes. This meeting received extensive coverage in the broadcast and print Russian media. The NCFA delegation met with officials at the Ministry of Education, the arm of Russian government charged with administering adoption procedures. NCFA briefed Ambassador William Burns and Consul General James Pettit at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. In all meetings, NCFA advocated strategic ideas developed with the assistance of leaders within the American adoption community.

NCFA and adoption leaders in America are deeply concerned about the tragic deaths of these children, and have offered four specific reform ideas: timely implementation of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption by both countries, ending the unregulated practice of “independent” adoption in Russia, accelerating post-placement reporting, and strengthening the

screening and training of prospective adoptive parents. These targeted reforms would improve child protection for Russian orphans, while preserving the opportunity for thousands of others to find loving, permanent families of their own through adoption in the future.

Atwood continued, “We could not be more encouraged by the responses our reform ideas have received from Russian leaders, and by their commitments to ongoing dialogue. Together, we have created a tremendous opportunity for policy improvements. Now we must work together to achieve them.”

## **About NCFA**

Since 1980, NCFA has been a leading voice among national adoption and child welfare organizations. NCFA is a research, education, and advocacy nonprofit that provides adoption information, promotes ethical adoption practices, informs public policy and opinion about adoption issues, and serves as a resource for women with unplanned pregnancies, adopted persons and their families, those seeking to adopt, and adoption professionals.

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