

National Adoption Month

Written by Grassley Press

Monday, 21 November 2011 16:25

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Senator Chuck Grassley made remarks on the Senate floor yesterday about National Adoption Month. Click [here](#) for video of remarks. Senator Grassley is the co-founder and co-chairman of the [Senate Caucus on Foster Youth](#).

Prepared Remarks of U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley

Wednesday, November 16, 2011

In honor of National Adoption Month, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss my support for Senate Resolution 302 and for policies that promote and encourage adoption. For years, I have championed efforts to increase awareness of adoption and help streamline the process for families who open their hearts and homes to children who have no other family. Senate Resolution 302 helps promote national awareness of adoption and the children awaiting families, celebrates children and families involved in adoption, and encourages the people of the United States to secure safety, permanency, and well-being for all children.

As co-founder and co-chair of the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth, I have taken a keen interest in helping children who find themselves in the foster care system.

In the United States today, more than 400,000 children live in the foster care system. Many of

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these children have been welcomed into adoptive homes. However, over 105,000 of those in foster care are still waiting to be adopted.

According to the Administration of Children and Families, in my home state of Iowa, more than 4,700 kids entered the foster care system last year. A total of 6,500 kids were in my state's foster care system in 2010.

Foster youth simply desire to have what so many of us were blessed to have —that is, a home with caring, loving parents and siblings. They want permanency. Too many older children in foster care, especially those with special needs, are often the ones who wait the longest to leave foster care. These kids are less likely than younger children to find “forever homes.”

While research shows that 40 percent of Americans have considered adopting, many are reluctant because they are unsure of the adoption process. They have inaccurate perceptions about the children who are eligible to be adopted. Some believe that children in foster care are there because of delinquency and other behavior problems.

The unfortunate fact is that most children who are in foster care are there because they were abused, neglected, or abandoned. These vulnerable children desperately need a family structure. They need parents who serve as positive role models to help them become bright and successful members of their communities.

While progress is being made to increase adoption, there is always more work to be done. Helping in this process are numerous agencies and nonprofit organizations who work tirelessly to find worthy American families who want to be adopting parents.

In Iowa, one such agency is Four Oaks Family and Children Services of Cedar Rapids. Four Oaks has had a recruiter working with Wendy's Wonderful Kids since 2005.

Wendy's Wonderful Kids is an innovative program of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, named after the late American business icon who founded Wendy's Restaurants. The foundation's mission is to promote adoption. It recently released a report about the

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success of the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program. Specifically, the program is more focused on the harder-to-place children. Recruiters work with children to find them the most appropriate placement. This program is a success story.

Congress has also acted. In 2008, I was part of a bipartisan effort to pass the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act of 2008. This new law represented the most significant and far-reaching improvements to child welfare in over a decade.

It provided additional federal incentives for states to move children from foster care to adoptive homes. It included legislation I had introduced to make it easier for foster children to be permanently cared for by their own relatives, including grandparents and aunts and uncles, and to stay in their own home communities.

Provisions in the law also made all children with special needs eligible for federal adoption assistance. Previously, that assistance had been limited to children who were removed from very low-income families. The law broke new ground by establishing opportunities to help kids who age out of the foster care system at age 18 by giving states the option to extend their care and by helping them pursue education or vocational training.

In late 2009, Senator Mary Landrieu and I formed the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth to give older youths in and out of care and their families a place where their voices could be heard. We wanted foster youth to be a part of the legislative process. By hearing from young people and their families who have experienced the foster care system firsthand, congressional leaders will become more aware of the issues facing young people and their families.

The caucus has and will continue to generate new ideas to prevent negative outcomes and create new opportunities for success. We wanted to focus on helping young people when they age out of the foster care system, typically at 18 years. As many as 29,000 children age out every year without ever having found an adoptive placement, and without the security of a family, they often end up homeless, incarcerated, or addicted to drugs.

Children who age out of the system enter adulthood without knowing what it was like to be raised having their own family. They missed out on having a mom and a dad, and maybe brothers and sisters, to grow with and learn from, and whom they would have relationships with

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the rest of their life. They missed out on a very important part of childhood that they will never know, one that too many of us take for granted. They are thrown into the world by themselves and forced to take care of themselves. They struggle to pay bills, to find and hold a job, and to simply make ends meet.

This is why adoption awareness is so important.

Since the first National Adoption Day in 2000, more than 35,000 children have joined forever families during National Adoption Day. In 2010 alone, adoptions for almost 5,000 children were finalized through 400 National Adoption Day events in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

These are impressive numbers -- numbers that make us proud of the work being done to help children in foster care. But there is always more work to be done, and it is through awareness like this that we can help that work continue.

In passing Senate Resolution 302, this body will make an important statement about our collective support for the needs of foster children. It recognizes the families who took the giant leap to open their homes to other children.

National Adoption Month is about kids who need a home. It's about kids who just want a mom and a dad. It's about helping children who are victims of neglect and abuse. It's about giving children living in foster care the ability to live their dreams.

We need to keep working together to break down the barriers to adoption so every child feels the relief of a solid family. I'm proud to support the many kids who wait for permanency and salute the many organizations that make those dreams come true.