

seek ways to improve the administrative agencies and legal courts that serve such vulnerable children.

The bills are designed to encourage students graduating with social work degrees and law degrees to spend several years working in the child welfare system. Eligible students would receive loan forgiveness for working in child welfare agencies and courts for abused and neglected children. The amount of loan forgiveness would increase over time to reward experience, and to retain social workers and attorneys in the system.

Every day, approximately 500,000 children are in the foster care system. Services to such children need to be improved so that every child's health and safety is paramount, and every child secures a permanent home. These priorities were established in the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act, thanks to the leadership of Senator DEWINE and a bipartisan coalition. To achieve such bold goals, we must have trained, committed social workers and skilled attorneys serving such children and their families.

There is a compelling need to invest in social workers. The turnover rate for child welfare agencies has doubled in the past decade. Making decisions about a child's health and safety is a serious challenge, and we need more experienced and trained social workers to serve children and their families.

Many social workers are burdened with a staggering caseload. The number of social workers per children in the child welfare system varies widely from state to state, and not all states even report their child protective services workforce data. Still, we know there is a compelling need in many places. The Child Maltreatment 2000 Report published by the Department of Health and Human Services indicates that the national average is 130 children per investigative workers, and several states acknowledge that workers have over 200 children to monitor and assess. Obviously, we need to recruit and retain qualified social workers to serve children and families at risk.

Experienced attorneys are also needed to help manage the individual cases and to help ensure that the bold, new time frames established by the Adoption and Safe Families Act are met. Under this new law, courts face stricter requirements to monitor and make decisions about a child's safety, health, and placement in a permanent home. This means qualified attorneys need to work with the courts, the agencies, and the families.

In West Virginia, and across our country, children and families in the child welfare system need and deserve qualified social workers and attorneys. Senator DEWINE's bill to offer student loan forgiveness would provide the right incentive to recruit and retain new professionals in the system. It would be a meaningful addition to the Higher Education Act reauthorization.

SOWING THE SEEDS FOR DEMOCRACY IN CROATIA

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, I rise today to bring to my colleagues' attention the Civitas International Civic Education Exchange Program—a program that is helping to promote democratic principles in emerging and established democracies throughout the world.

The Civitas Exchange Program, administered by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act, engages educators from around the world in the development of effective civic education initiatives that can be implemented in their own countries. The program provides international leaders in civic education the opportunity to learn from one another and to assist each other in improving education for democracy in their nations.

The Civitas Exchange Program makes use of the experience, expertise, and programmatic offerings of U.S.-based State and national civic education centers by linking them in partnerships with public and private sector entities in emerging and advanced democracies. The partnerships serve to institutionalize civic education in these nations, creating working relationships that lead to tangible results for both American and international students and teachers. Today the Civitas Exchange Program is operating in 30 countries linked with 22 American States.

One of those partnerships involves my home State of Oregon, and the States of Delaware and Maryland, linked with the country of Croatia. Marilyn Cover, the executive director of the Classroom Law Project in Portland, OR, manages the partnership. Ms. Cover recently brought a delegation of American teachers and Croatian educators to Capitol Hill to observe our system of government first hand. I am pleased to recognize the two Oregonian teachers participating in the exchange, Bert Key from Sandy Union High School in Sandy, OR and Maggie McSwiggen, from Vocational Village in Portland, OR. I would also like to recognize the Croatian teachers in the delegation, Jadranka Kostanjsak from Zagreb, Jasminka Zagorac from Zagreb, and Natalija Palcic from Split.

These teachers, and others from Delaware and Maryland, are currently working with teachers from Croatia to develop a series of lessons comparing the Constitutions of the United States and Croatia, examining political parties within each country, and exploring ideas of personal and civic responsibility for use in their respective classes. Begun during a summer writing program, the teachers continue to refine their lessons through team teaching in classrooms in both the United States and Croatia. It is an excellent example of the reciprocal nature of the exchange, which provides benefits to American students and international students alike.

The ideas exchanged in Oregon's partnership have led to at least two significant developments with the support of the Croatian Ministry of Education and Sport: first, as part of the exchange, an American civics curriculum, Foundations of Democracy program on justice, has been translated and is now a requirement in Croatian preschools and primary schools; second, We the People . . . Project Citizen, an American civic education program which engages young people in learning how to monitor and influence public policy, has become a requirement in grades 7 and 8 for secondary schools in Croatia.

The Civitas Exchange Program is an excellent example of how programs supported by the federal government can help achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives by helping emerging democracies develop a political culture supportive of democratic values, principles, and institutions. I wish to thank the Center for Civic Education for their successful administration of the Civitas program and applaud Oregonian Marilyn Cover for her excellent work in the project.

RETIREMENT OF SENATOR FRED THOMPSON

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute and recognize the accomplishments of a colleague who will be retiring at the end of this term. Senator FRED THOMPSON has represented Tennessee in the Senate for 8 years. During his tenure, he has been an important advocate for a wide range of legislative reform activities.

Throughout his Senate career, Senator THOMPSON has fought for protecting our national security, making government more efficient, and improving programs that are important to America's families, such as Social Security and Medicare. Senator THOMPSON has also been nationally recognized for his expertise in international affairs as was evidenced by his recent nomination to the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations.

As the ranking member of the Committee on Governmental Affairs, FRED THOMPSON held more than a dozen hearings on important national security issues, including missile defense technology and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As a result of his efforts, Senator THOMPSON played a key role in bringing the issue of weapons proliferation to the forefront of the national agenda.

In addition, FRED THOMPSON has been the leader in many efforts to reform and improve government. He has strongly supported proposals to streamline the regulatory process and to ensure the cost-effectiveness and benefit of regulatory programs. As the primary author of the Government Information Security Act, he also championed efforts to enhance the security of government computer systems and to strengthen privacy protection on Federal Web sites.