

colleagues to try to deal with some of these legitimate issues around financing. But I cannot support block-granting our child welfare system because it is imperative we have standards. If the States could have done this on their own, without Federal oversight funding and standards, they would have done so.

Therefore, we have to ask ourselves, How do we maintain child safety protections that we passed in the Adoption and Safe Families Act? How do we require the targeting of funds to prevention and postfoster care services? What happens if there is a crisis and more foster care children enter the system? These are all important questions. They deserve answers. But it is critical we begin the process to look at how we change the incentives.

In the past, my colleagues, Senators LANDRIEU, DEWINE, and GRASSLEY, put forth a proposal to restructure the priorities in our child welfare system. I think their proposal was headed in the right direction. It ensured that incentives were in place so that foster care stays would be shorter. I applaud my colleague Senator ROCKEFELLER, who has been a long-time champion on these issues, for his welfare reform bill which offers an alternative to financing child welfare by aligning foster care and adoption assistance with TANF eligibility.

I look forward to tackling this hard issue in the months ahead. I look forward to seeing the number of children in foster care decrease. I look forward to seeing more children in foster care being reunited with their birth families or being placed into permanent, loving homes.

For those of you who want more insight into what this issue is truly all about, I urge you to see the movie "Antwone Fisher," to read Mr. Fisher's book "Finding Fish," to understand that may be just one story but it stands for countless others, innocent children to whom we owe a chance for a better life.

I ask unanimous consent that an article appearing in USA Today be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From USA Today]

EASING FOSTER CARE'S PAIN UNITES  
DISPARATE POLITICIANS  
(By Hillary Rodham Clinton and Tom DeLay)

Occasionally, a movie shines the spotlight of public recognition onto a problem that lingers deep in the nation's shadow. It forces the country either to confront the issue or look away. Today, the movie is Antwone Fisher, and the 542,000 children languishing in our broken foster care system are the issue.

Antwone Fisher tells the true story of a boy born in prison and abandoned by his mother to years of abuse, both emotional and sexual, in foster care. The compelling story of his life, written by Fisher, is about a child's hope and resilience despite an uncaring system. While we cheer Fisher's success against such abysmal odds, the movie also reminds us that too many still suffer needlessly in a foster care system that is inherently flawed.

When Fisher turned 18, the system dropped him onto the streets. Fisher turned to the Navy, where he discovered structure, discipline, the power of education and strong guidance from an adult mentor. This powerful catalyst turned Fisher's life around. But what about all of the others in our foster care system whose longing for meaning and direction goes unrequited?

Every year 16,000 young adults age out of this system. Many grew up without guidance and faced enormous hardships. The foster care system simply did not teach them the basic skills to live independently in the world. They never learned how to cook, balance a checkbook or apply for a job. Without this critical guidance, they emerge from a system unwanted and uncertain about navigating life's turns. In short, they enter adulthood the way they spend their childhood: alone.

#### RESET PRIORITIES

Fisher's story should spark broad reforms of the foster care system, which needs to be changed, one community at a time, so that no more children fall through the cracks. Despite our political differences, we are committed to working together so that children like Fisher do not languish in foster care until at 18, then get expelled with little guidance and support.

The federal government now gives states almost \$7 billion annually to protect children from abuse and neglect, place children in foster care and provide adoption assistance. But the timing is off: Most of the money goes to states for use after a child is removed from a troubled home. Instead, it should be used to provide more preventive resources—to keep children out of foster care to begin with—and to assist children after they leave the system.

Senators and representatives from both parties acknowledge that we have to change

the way we finance our foster care system. Greater emphasis needs to be put on reducing both the number of children in the system and the length of time they stay in foster care. American's children need safe, permanent homes—something Fisher never knew as a child.

#### BUSH OFFERS ONE PLAN

We can find a bipartisan solution to reform the way we finance our child welfare system, but both the House and Senate must make reforms a priority. President Bush has offered one proposal that deserves careful consideration. He wants to give states an option to change the way foster care is financed so they can do more to prevent children from entering foster care, shorten the time spend in such care and provide more assistance to children and their families after they leave the system.

Although reform is never easy, there are proven legislative successes in this area. During the past five years, Congress has passed two major bipartisan child-welfare bills, which we both strongly supported. One helped to nearly double the number of children being adopted from foster care, and the second has helped to provide better transition services for older children who, like Fisher, never are adopted and age out of the foster care system at 18.

We are no doubt surprising many of our friends by writing this piece together, but that just underscores our point. If a public-policy dilemma can bring the two of us together, it clearly deserves a hard look from everyone. Fisher's success should be the norm for all children who travel through the foster care system, not be one exceptional spark in the darkness of countless children's lives.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The hour of 2:30 having arrived, under the previous order the Senate stands in recess until 3:30.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 2:30 p.m., recessed until 3:30 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. DOLE).

Mr. REID. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

### NOTICE

***Incomplete record of Senate proceedings.  
Today's Senate proceedings will be continued in the next issue of the Record.***