

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act is the way in which the Federal Government helps communities across the country protect some of our most vulnerable children. It was first passed the year I was elected to the Senate. We have reauthorized it several times since then, and working with Senator SPECTER and Senators on both sides of the aisle, I am glad the Senate has done so again this year. The programs authorized during the past 30 years by the RHYA have consistently proven critical to protecting and giving hope to our Nation's runaway and homeless youth.

Under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, every State receives a basic center grant to provide housing and crisis services for runaway and homeless youth and their families. Community-based groups around the country can also apply for funding through the Transitional Living Program and the sexual abuse prevention/street outreach grant program. The transitional living program grants are used to provide longer term housing to homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 21, and to help them become self-sufficient. The outreach grants are used to target youth susceptible to engaging in high-risk behaviors while living on the street.

Despite the changes to the bill made in response to Republican objections, our bill makes improvements to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act reauthorizations of past years. It doubles funding for states by instituting a minimum of \$200,000, which will allow states to better meet the diverse needs of their communities. This bill also requires the Department of Health and Human Services to develop performance standards for grantees. Providing program guidelines would level the playing field for bidders, ensure consistency among providers, and increase the effectiveness of the services under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. In addition, our legislation develops an incidence study to better estimate the number of runaway and homeless youth and to identify trends. The incidence study would provide more accurate estimates of the runaway and homeless youth population and would help lawmakers make better policy decisions and allow communities to provide better outreach.

On April 29, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing to focus the Senate's attention on these problems and to identify and develop solutions to protect runaway and homeless youth. It was the first Senate hearing on these matters in more than a decade. We heard from a distinguished panel of witnesses, some of whom spoke firsthand about the significant challenges that young people face when they have nowhere to go.

Our witnesses demonstrated that young people can overcome harrowing obstacles and create new opportunities when given the chance. One witness went from living as a homeless youth

in his teens to earning two Oscar nominations as a distinguished actor. Another witness is working with homeless youth at the same Vermont organization that enabled him to stop living on the streets and is on his way to great things. Our witness panel gave useful and insightful suggestions on how to improve the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act to make it more effective. We have included many of these recommendations in our bill.

The prevalence of homelessness among young people in America is shockingly high. The problem is not limited to large cities. Its impact is felt strongly in smaller communities and rural areas as well. It affects our young people directly and reverberates throughout our families and communities. That this problem continues in the richest country in the world means that we need to redouble our commitment and our efforts to safeguard our Nation's youth. We need to support the dedicated people in communities across the country who work to address these problems every day.

In my home State of Vermont, the Vermont Coalition for Runaway and Homeless Youth, the New England Network for Child, Youth, and Family Services, and Spectrum Youth and Family Services in Burlington all receive grants under these programs and have provided excellent services that provide assistance to thousands of youth.

The overwhelming need for services is not limited to any one state or community. Many transitional living programs are forced to turn away young people seeking shelter. We heard testimony of an exemplary program within blocks of our Nation's Capitol that has a waiting list as long as a year. This is unacceptable. The needs in our communities are real, and reauthorizing the law will allow these programs to expand their enormously important work.

These topics are difficult but deserve our attention. I am glad the Senate has taken an important step toward addressing these issues by passing the Runaway and Homeless Youth Protection Act today.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Leahy amendment at the desk be agreed to; the committee substitute amendment, as amended, be agreed to; the bill be read a third time and passed; the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

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

The amendment (No. 5652) was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of amendments.")

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to.

The bill (S. 2982), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third read-

ing, was read the third time, and passed.

#### EXTENDING WAIVER AUTHORITY FOR THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6890, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6890) to extend the waiver authority for the Secretary of Education under section 105 of subtitle A of Title IV of division B of Public Law 109-148, relating to elementary and secondary education hurricane recovery relief, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read three times and passed, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 6890) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### DEFENSE PRODUCTION ACT EXTENSION AND REAUTHORIZATION OF 2008

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6894, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6894) to extend and reauthorize the Defense Production Act of 1950, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, today we are acting on House-passed legislation which contains a 1-year extension of the Defense Production Act, DPA, which I hope will be swiftly approved by the Senate. While I am delighted that this extension legislation was passed by the House Tuesday night, it is crucial to remember that many of this law's authorities, last renewed in 2003, expire on September 30. We have just a few legislative days to get this done. As the United States continues to fight two wars and respond to various natural disasters, it is important that we not allow key provisions to expire—provisions allowing our Government