

of the last several days I am optimistic that the Good Friday Accords remain the key to unlocking the formula for a lasting peace throughout Ireland. With the help of the British, Irish and American governments, there is still time for Northern Ireland's political leaders to find within themselves the courage to move forward with the implementation of the Accords. I hope and pray they do so before that time runs out.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, July 14, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,624,306,987,432.02 (Five trillion, six hundred twenty-four billion, three hundred six million, nine hundred eighty-seven thousand, four hundred thirty-two dollars and two cents).

One year ago, July 14, 1998, the Federal debt stood at \$5,530,848,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred thirty billion, eight hundred forty-eight million).

Five years ago, July 14, 1994, the Federal debt stood at \$4,624,996,000,000 (Four trillion, six hundred twenty-four billion, nine hundred ninety-six million).

Ten years ago, July 14, 1989, the Federal debt stood at \$2,800,265,000,000 (Two trillion, eight hundred billion, two hundred sixty-five million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$2 trillion—\$2,824,041,987,432.02 (Two trillion, eight hundred twenty-four billion, forty-one million, nine hundred eighty-seven thousand, four hundred thirty-two dollars and two cents) during the past 10 years.

#### TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this week marks the 25th Anniversary of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. I had hoped as part of celebrating the silver anniversary of the passage of this landmark legislation that the Congress would be sending to President Clinton for signature, S. 249, the Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children Protection Act. This legislation reauthorizes programs under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act as well as authorizes funding for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Both programs are critical to our nation's youth and to our nation's well-being.

Unfortunately, the bill is still being held up for no good reason. I have been working since 1996 to enact this legislation. Last Congress and again this Congress, we have been able to clear the passage of this important legislation on the Democratic side of the aisle.

I had hoped that by the end of this week my colleagues on the other side of the aisle could be persuaded to let

this legislation pass the Senate and President Clinton sign it into law. The many grassroots supporters of this legislation and I remain frustrated.

If we do not pass this legislation soon, I fear it will again, as it was last Congress, be caught up in a more contentious debate on juvenile crime.

I had hoped that we had been able to move away from using this non-controversial legislation to try to pass unreasonable juvenile justice legislation. Last Congress, the Majority was roundly criticized for its tactic, which the New York Times labeled a "stealth assault on juvenile justice." That procedural gimmick cost us valuable time to get this legislation enacted.

This year, it appeared that such procedural ambushes had been avoided in the Senate and minimized in the House. In late May, the Senate had a full and fair debate on a juvenile justice bill. After significant improvements through amendments, the Hatch-Leahy juvenile justice bill passed the Senate on May 20, 1999 by a strong bipartisan vote. The House finally considered juvenile crime legislation in June, although the Republican leadership has steadfastly blocked a House-Senate conference on the Hatch-Leahy bill.

Separately, in April of this year the Senate passed S. 249, the Missing, Exploited and Runaway Children Protection Act of 1999. In May, the House passed S.249 with an amendment. As I explained in a floor statement on June 30, I was hopeful that the Senate would immediately take up and pass the amended version of S.249 and worked to do that. I consulted with the Department of Health and Human Services about certain concerns I had with the House amendment and was reassured that Vermont would not be adversely affected by it. I noted my disagreement with other aspects of the House action and ways to deal with those without holding final passage of S.249 hostage. I regret to report, however, that this important legislation has been in Senate limbo since late May.

The guts of the legislation remain the Leahy-Hatch substitute language to S.249 that was reported by the Judiciary Committee and which passed the Senate in April. We were careful to recognize the important work of these programs in Vermont, as well as the many other programs and staff across the U.S. that are working effectively with runaway and homeless youth and their families. The House-inserted amendments do nothing to change the special care we took in the Senate to craft the main components of this legislation.

The Leahy-Hatch substitute language preserves current law governing the minimum grants available for small States for the Basic Center grants and also preserves the current confidentiality and records protections for runaway and homeless youth.

In addition, our substitute amendment reauthorizes the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Rural Demonstration Projects. This program provides targeted assistance to States with rural juvenile populations. Programs serving runaway and homeless youth have found that those in rural areas are particularly difficult to reach and serve effectively.

Under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, every year each State is awarded a Basic Center grant for housing and crisis services for runaway and homeless children and their families. The funding is based on its juvenile population, with a minimum grant of \$100,000 currently awarded to smaller States, such as Vermont. Effective community-based programs around the country can also apply directly for the funding available for the Transitional Living Program and the Sexual Abuse Prevention/Street Outreach grants. The Transitional Living Program grants are used to provide longer term housing to homeless teens age 16 to 21, and to help these teenagers become more self-sufficient. The Sexual Abuse Prevention/Street Outreach Program also targets teens who have engaged in or are at risk of engaging in high risk behaviors while living on the street.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act does more than shelter these children in need. As the National Network for Youth has stressed, the Act's programs "provide critical assistance to youth in high-risk situations all over the country." This Act also ensures that these children and their families have access to important services, such as individual, family or group counseling, alcohol and drug counseling and a myriad of other resources to help these young people and their families get back on track.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Services in Vermont show positive results. For those who do not think rural areas have significant numbers of runaway youth, I note that in fiscal year 1998, the Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs and Spectrum Youth & Family Services ("the Coalition"), reported that 81 percent of the 1,067 youths served by the Coalition programs were in a positive living situation at the close of service. They were reunited with their families, living with a friend or relative, or in another appropriate living situation. They were not in Department of Corrections or State Rehabilitative Services (SRS) custody.

Since 1992, the Coalition programs have seen a 175 percent increase in the numbers of youths served: The Coalition programs served 388 runaway and homeless youths in 1992. This number increased to 1,067 in 1997. In 1998, 61 percent of the youths served were 15, 16 or 17 years old.

The Coalition programs are the "who you gonna' call" in cases of family crisis and runaway incidents. They are a