the changes we made, the permanence of correction to injustice.

So I am very pleased that in just a few minutes, we will act as a body to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. We owe it to the memories of those who fought before us—and we owe it to our future, a future when equality is a reality in our hearts and minds and not just the law—to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for this critical legislation because in the 41 years since it became law, we have seen tremendous progress, and now it is time to ensure that the progress continues, that we protect the civil liberties of each and every American.

Mr. President, I yield back all our time.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, is there still time available on this side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

Mr. LEAHY. The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on the third reading of the bill.

The bill (H.R. 9) was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass? On this question, the yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The following Senators were necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) and the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) would have voted ''yea.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CORNYN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 212 Leg.]

YEAS—98

Akaka	DeMint	Leahy
Alexander	DeWine	Levin
Allard	Dodd	Lieberman
Allen	Dole	Lincoln
Baucus	Domenici	Lott
Bayh	Dorgan	Lugar
Bennett	Durbin	Martinez
Biden	Ensign	McCain
Bingaman	Feingold	McConnell
Bond	Feinstein	Menendez
Boxer	Frist	Mikulski
Brownback	Graham	Murkowski
Bunning	Grassley	Murray
Burns	Gregg	Nelson (FL)
Burr	Hagel	Nelson (NE)
Byrd	Harkin	Obama
Cantwell	Hatch	Pryor
Carper	Hutchison	Reed
Chafee	Inhofe	Reid
Chambliss	Inouye	Roberts
Clinton	Isakson	Rockefeller
Coburn	Jeffords	Salazar
Cochran	Johnson	Santorum
Coleman	Kennedy	Sarbanes
Collins	Kerry	Schumer
Conrad	Kohl	Sessions
Cornyn	Kyl	Shelby
Craig	Landrieu	Smith
Dayton	Lautenberg	Snowe
Specter	Talent	Voinovich
Stabenow	Thomas	Warner
Stevens	Thune	Wyden
Sununu	Vitter	

NOT VOTING—2

Crapo	Enzi

The bill (H.R. 9) was passed.

Mr. FRIST. I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. REID. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. For the information of our colleagues, the Democratic leader and I have been in discussion. Let me briefly outline what the plans for tonight will be and tomorrow. Most importantly for my colleagues, there will be no more rollcall votes tonight or tomorrow. We will probably see a lot of Members leave the room.

We will turn within a couple of minutes to the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, a very important bill that we will spend approximately 2 hours on tonight. Following that, we will have debate on two circuit judges and two district judges. We will be voting on the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act tonight by voice vote and all four of those judges by voice tonight.

We will be in tomorrow. We will have no rollcall votes tomorrow. I will have an announcement later tonight or possibly tomorrow on what the schedule will be on Monday in terms of votes on Monday, if we will have a vote or not. Debate tomorrow will be, in all likelihood, on the Child Custody Protection Act, plus we will have a period of morning business for other matters.

With that, we will be able to turn to the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act which we will be passing in about 2 hours.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY AND VIOLENT CRIME REDUCTION ACT OF 2006

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 4472, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4472) to protect children, to secure the safety of judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and their family members, to reduce and prevent gang violence, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 4686

(Purpose: In the Nature of a substitute)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CORNYN). Under the previous order, the Hatch amendment at the desk is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 4686) was agreed to, as follows:

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Text of Amendments'')

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah is recognized.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues for granting unanimous consent to pass the most comprehensive child crimes and protection bill in our Nation's history—H.R. 4472, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006.

This bill started in the House of Representatives by a courageous and ambitious Congressman from Florida, MARK FOLEY. MARK is with us in the Senate Chamber today, and I want to thank him, again, for getting this ball rolling and for fighting like a champion on behalf of our children. I appreciate his tenacity and enthusiasm—we would not be here without his devotion and hard work.

I also thank Senator BIDEN, who joined me in sponsoring the original Senate version of this bill. Senator BIDEN and I have worked together on so many bills, none more important than what we are accomplishing today for our children. Senators FRIST, SPECTER, and REID thank you for making this bill priority and for getting this bill through.

The bill we are about to pass, the Adam Walsh Child Safety and Protection Act, represents a collaboration between the House and Senate to include the strong provisions of S. 1086, the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act, and H.R. 4472, The Child Safety Act. It creates a National Sex Offender Registry with uniform standards for the registration of sex offenders, including a lifetime registration requirement for the most serious offenders. This is critical to sew together the patch-work quilt of 50 different State attempts to identity and keep track of sex offenders.

The Adam Walsh Act establishes strong Federal penalties for sex offenders who fail to register, or fail to update their information, including up to 10 years in prison for non-compliance.

The Adam Walsh Act imposes tough penalties for the most serious crimes against children, including a 30 year mandatory penalty for raping a child and no less than 10 years in prison for a sex trafficking offense. In fact, this bill creates a series of assured penalties for crimes of violence against children, including penalties for murder, kidnapping, maiming, and using a dangerous weapon against a child. And the bill allows for the death penalty in the most serious cases of child abuse, including the murder of a child in sexual exploitation and kidnapping offenses.

The bottom line here is that sex offenders have run rampant in this country and now Congress and the people are ready to respond with legislation that will curtail the ability of sex offenders to operate freely. It is our hope that programs like NBC Dateline's ''To Catch a Predator'' series will no longer have enough material to fill an hour or even a minute. Now, it seems, they can go to any city in this country and catch dozens of predators willing to go on-line to hunt children.

Laws regarding registration for sex offenders have not been consistent from State to State now all States will lock arms and present a unified front in the battle to protect children. Web sites that have been weak in the past, due to weak laws and haphazard updating and based on inaccurate information, will now be accurate, updated and useful for finding sex offenders.

There are more than a half-million registered sex offenders in the United States. Those are the ones we know. Undoubtedly there are more. That number is going to go up. Over 100,000 of those sex offenders are registered but missing. That number is going to go down. We are going to get tough on these people. Some estimate it is as high as 150,000 sex offenders who are not complying. That is killing our children.

Another important part of this bill will help prevent the sexual exploitation of children through the production of sexually explicit material. Every day we hear new stories about how pornographers and predators take advantage of new technology to exploit children in new ways. It is very difficult for legislatures even to keep up, and when we do pass new legislation, it is often stymied in the courts.

Federal law requires producers of some sexually explicit material to keep records regarding the identity and age of performers and to make those records available for inspection. The current statute, however, was enacted before the Internet existed and covers only some sexually explicit material. The provisions in the act before us brings key definitions in the law up to date, extends the record keeping requirement to more sexually explicit material, and makes refusal to permit inspection of these records a crime.

I want to thank John Walsh, host of ''America's Most Wanted,'' and his wife, Reve—who have waited nearly 25 years for this day. Next Thursday, July 27, 2006, marks 25 years since the abduction and subsequent murder of their son Adam—for whom this bill is named. And on that 25th anniversary the President will sign into law legislation that will help law enforcement do what John has been doing all along—hunt down predators and criminals. I want to thank the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for their tireless work and for their assistance with crafting this legislation.

This is smart legislation and I am very proud of the Adam Walsh Act. I am determined that Congress will play its part in protecting the children of my home state of Utah and America. I have never been more excited to see a bill signed into law.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I begin speaking to this legislation by thanking my buddy. And I know that is a colloquial expression in this formal place we work when I say ''my buddy,'' but Senator HATCH and I have worked together for a long time. It is hard for me to believe we have been here as long as we have. I have actually been here a couple years longer than he has. We have our differences in philosophy. We have never had any differences personally. We have never had any differences in terms of our relationship.

The two things I am proudest of that we have both done is we have both—and I say this somewhat self-serving, I acknowledge—we both always hired staff that is respected. I do not think there has ever been a time that ORRIN has not had a staff and staff members who my staff completely, totally trusted. I think it is fair to say that is the case on ORRIN'S side as well.

That makes a gigantic difference because I think the work that Ken Valentine, the fellow sitting to ORRIN'S right, did—a loner, Secret Service guy from the administration, from the executive branch—and a fellow I am very proud of, whom I will mention in a moment—the work they did with John Walsh and others, to overcome the hurdles that get thrown in the way of good legislation because everybody has their own agenda.

Everybody knows that for Orrin and me—and I would add my friend from North Dakota—that some of us have had this as sort of a—I have been accused of this being a hobbyhorse for me, this, all the work we have done for so long on dealing with child predators and abused women and abused children. But what happens sometimes is that good legislation gets stuck because other Senators, who do not have that as the same priority—although they are for it—attach a lot of extraneous things because there is something they feel is even more critical than the legislation, and they see it, to use the Senate jargon, as a vehicle to get their views heard and their legislation passed.

Well, as to the work that Dave Turk of my staff did and Ken Valentine did in order to sort of clear the way for this, I think everyone who has worked on this, including John Walsh, would acknowledge is extraordinary.

So I want to personally—there are others, I am sure. There are others. I do not mean, by mentioning these two individuals, to in any way denigrate the incredible work done by so many others. But I think sometimes the public wonders why we pay staff members—all of whom can make a lot more money if they did something else—the kind of salaries they get paid, in relative terms. It is because they are so good. They are so dedicated. They are so talented.

In my experience of being here 33 years, I have found that when a staff member, no less than a Senator, has an intellectual as well as an emotional commitment to what they are doing, it is even more effective.

I know for my friend and staff member, Dave Turk, who is a father, and for Ken Valentine, whom I have only gotten to know personally recently, this is more than legislation, this is more than passing this piece of legislation. This is the stuff of which your life's work is viewed as being worthwhile.

I remember Jerry Brown, when he used to be the Governor of California, once said when he was cutting pay—I am not making a judgment of whether he should have or should not have—when cutting the pay of State employees, he made a statement only Jerry Brown could make, 20 years ago: Well, they have the psychic remuneration of living in California. I do not know about that. But I can tell you that the psychic remuneration for ORRIN HATCH and JOE BIDEN and Ken Valentine and Dave Turk, and many others who worked on this, makes this job worthwhile.

The two things of which I am most proud that I have done in 33 years are dealing with this issue in particular and culminating in this legislation, the Adam Walsh Child Protection Safety Act, and the Violence Against Women Act—which, I might add, one of only seven guys who jumped out front in 1994 to get that done was also ORRIN HATCH.

So, Senator HATCH, I thank you. We have been in the minority, the majority, the minority; we have switched places back and forth, but it has never changed our relationship, never changed how we have worked with each other, and never changed the good work I think we and many others can say we are proud to have participated in.

Mr. President, I wish to talk a few minutes about the actual act. Congress has done a good deal over the last 25 years—and I might add, starting with, God love him, our old and deceased friend, Senator Thurmond from South Carolina—to protect kids. We created the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in 1984. We enacted the crime bill in 1994. We enacted the Amber Alert system in 2003.

But every time we have done something significant, the bad guys have figured out a way to take advantage of it, to find a loophole, to find an opening. And that is what this is about—and I wish he had floor privileges because he could speak to it better than any of us—but this is about, to paraphrase John Walsh, with whom I had dinner the other night—this is about closing the door. This is about uniting 50 States in common purpose and in league with one another to prevent these lowlifes from slipping through the cracks. So we recognize that what we have done in the past did not do all we wanted to do.

I might add one more thing. JOE BIDEN and ORRIN HATCH come from different sides of the political spectrum on a lot of things. But I can assure you, not only is this tough, but the civil liberties of Americans are not in jeopardy with this. This is not—this is not—a case where in order to get bad guys we have had to in any way lessen the constitutional protections made available

to good guys. So I think it is a proud piece of work.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, as Senator HATCH has indicated, estimates there are over 550,000 sex offenders nationwide, and more than 20 percent of them are unaccounted for. I would argue that there are a whole lot more than 550,000, who never get caught up in the criminal web for a thousand different reasons that I do not have time to explain. But at a minimum, this means there are as many as 150,000 of these dangerous sex offenders out there, individuals who have already committed crimes and may, unless we do something, continue to jeopardize the most vulnerable among us.

The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act takes direct aim at this problem. Plain and simple, this legislation, I can say with certainty, will save children's lives.

Sexual predators must be tracked, and our cops and our parents have a right to know when these criminals are in their neighborhoods. That is what we do here.

First—an important point—let's start at the beginning. This legislation requires sex offenders to register prior to their release from prison, to make sure we give them absolutely no opportunity to do what happens now: fall through the cracks between the moment the prison door opens and before they set up a residence.

We also make sure we are keeping tabs on everyone who poses a threat to our kids. Advances in technology are a great thing, but many times there is a dark side. The Internet, for example, puts the knowledge of the world at a child's fingertips, but it can also be and is abused by sexual predators causing kids harm. To steal a phrase from my son, who is a Federal prosecutor, he told me: Dad, it used to be you could lock your door or hold your child's hand at the mall and keep them out of harm's way.

But today, in my son's words, with a click of a mouse, a predator can enter your child's bedroom in a locked home and begin the pernicious road to violating that child. That is why this legislation adds the ''use of the Internet to facilitate or commit a crime against a minor'' as an offense that could trigger registration.

And once someone is on a sex offender registry, we make sure they can't go back into hiding in the shadows. Under this bill, child predators would be required to periodically and in person check in with the authorities.

They also would be required to update their photographs so law enforcement and parents will know where these folks are and what they look like now and not solely what they looked like years ago that is unrecognizable now.

And if a registered offender fails to comply with any of these requirements, he or she faces a felony of up to 10 years in prison. If an unregistered sex offender commits a crime of violence, the offender will face a 5-year mandatory prison sentence in addition to any other sentence imposed.

A noncompliant sex offender will also face U.S. Marshals who have been brought in under this bill to lend their expertise and manpower to help track down these dangerous individuals.

John and I were talking about it at dinner. These guys saddle up, to use his phrase. They are the most underrated, underestimated part of American law enforcement. They do the job incredibly well. They want to get in on this, and they are now part of this. We now have designated their expertise and manpower to track down these individuals.

One of the biggest problems in our current sex offender registry system happens when registered sex offenders travel from one State to another.

Delaware has worked hard to keep track of the 3,123 sex offenders registered to my State. But there are other States that are not so advanced and whose systems are not so sophisticated.

This bill fully integrates and expands the State systems so that communities nationwide will be warned when high-risk offenders come to live among them. And we target resources under this bill at the worst of the worst and provide Federal dollars to make sure States aren't left holding the bag.

We also require the U.S. Department of Justice to create software to share with States in order to allow for information to be shared instantly and seamlessly among them. When a sex offender moves from New Jersey to Delaware, for example, we have to be absolutely sure that Delaware authorities know about it.

This bill also mandates a national sex offender Web site so that parents can find out who is living in their neighborhoods. Parents will now be able to search for information on sex offenders by geographic radius and ZIP Code.

Do we have a silver bullet, a foolproof system here? I have been around too long to know the answer to that question is no. What we do have is a slew of commonsense ways for fixing our current problem.

As I mentioned earlier, it has taken us months and years to get to the point of enacting this important bill into law. Again, I give credit where credit is due, as has already been mentioned, to John and Reve Walsh. I know we are not supposed to—and I will not—violate Senate rules by pointing out who is where. But the fact is, if I were sitting next to them in the gallery now, I suspect if I put my hand on his arm, I would feel the tension in his arm.

This has to be a very bittersweet moment for John Walsh. For what are we doing here today? We are naming a bill that will save the lives of hopefully thousands of other young people after a beautiful young boy who was victimized and killed.

The thing I find most amazing about John and Reve is, I don't know how anybody who has lost a child can have the courage to do what they have done. I know from my own experience, which I will not speak to, there are certain circumstances I cannot walk into because it reminds me of one of my children I lost.

I could never do what John and Reve did. I could never do what they did. And we could have never done today what we are doing without them. That is not hyperbole; that is the God's truth. We could never have gotten this done without John and Reve Walsh.

It has to be one god-awful bitter moment, for the 27th of this month, if I am not mistaken, will be the 25th anniversary.

A lot of people on this floor, including one of my colleagues I am sitting with, have lost children. It doesn't matter whether it is 2 years past, 10 years, 25 years, or 50 years past. That part never passes. I thank John and Reve for their courage, courage way beyond anything I could possess.

I have known John for many years. We go way back to 1984, working together to create the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children along with Senator HATCH. He has been at it year after year, pushing the Congress to do more.

John, you have been an inspiration. You continue to be. Don't underestimate it. You have been doing it so long, don't underestimate how many thousands of people take solace from what you do and what you have done.

It has not been my style in 33 years to take the floor to speak in such personal terms, but this is ultimately personal. It is the ultimate, ultimate personal thing, your child.

Earlier this week I had a chance to sit down with Ed Smart whose daughter Elizabeth—what a magnificently beautiful, poised, gracious young woman—then 14 years, was abducted at gunpoint from her family in Salt Lake City while her parents and four brothers slept. She was found 9 months later. The strength of that family's character, its resilience is remarkable.

I have taken too much of the Senate's time. Let me again thank my colleague from Utah. I also thank our committee chairman and all the members of our committee. They also deserve a great deal of credit.

Other Senators, including my colleague on the floor, who has been relentless, absolutely relentless, Senator DORGAN; he added a major, important piece to this legislation. I thank him for that. Senator BILL NELSON, CHUCK GRASSLEY, all contributed important parts to this bill. They each took tragedies that happened in their States and used them as a call to action.

Senators FRIST and REID—our majority and minority leaders—also deserve all our thanks by ensuring that this important bill was treated with the priority it deserved.

Congressman FOLEY has worked tirelessly on this bill in the House for

years, and Congressman POMEROY was by his side. And Chairman SENSENBRENNER guided this bill through the House of Representatives.

I don't think there is one of us on this floor who wouldn't trade away this bill for being able to bring back to life all those innocent lives that were lost that allowed us, in a bizarre way, to produce this legislation.

We cannot redeem the dead, but we can, in fact, protect the living. I think this bill, with the many parts I didn't mention, including DNA testing and a whole range of other things, is fair, decent, and honorable. Most important, there is not a single thing we can do that is more worthy of our effort than protecting our children. That is what all of us on this floor—and many who are not—today are playing a part in doing.

Again, I close by thanking John Walsh.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. DORGAN. Is there an order of speaking this evening, if I might inquire of the manager.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we go back and forth so long as we have people on both sides. So the distinguished Senator from North Dakota will be allowed to speak next and then the distinguished Senator from Virginia.

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

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I will pick up where the Senator from Delaware left off and the Senator from Utah, also thanking John Walsh and his wife Reve for their tremendous contribution to our society but in particular for this piece of legislation. We all have to deal in life with tragedies, struggles. It is the measure of a person to see how that individual responds.

Given the nature of the tragedy they experience, it could have easily destroyed them. They took this horrific incident and turned it into a tremendous good. As Senator BIDEN says, who knows personally, I can't think of anything worse than losing a child. Losing a child in such an incredibly tragic situation has to be more than you can possibly bear. To take that emotion and channel it into a positive course for the benefit of other children is an incredible legacy for Adam. I know John and Reve do it for that reason, to build this incredible legacy. This legacy is added to today by naming this bill the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act.

Not only is this a great thing they are doing for society, they are a great model for so many who experience tragedies every single day. People can look at them and see how something that I am sure brought them to their knees can be turned around to do so much good for so many. So they are not only helping the children, helping those who are victims of crime, but they are helping those who are victims of life's tragedies that befall us all and giving them an inspiration to move forward and turn tragedy into triumph. This is another triumph. It may not even be the biggest triumph they have experienced, but it is certainly a triumph and a positive thing to add to that legacy.

I rise to talk about two pieces of this bill I have been working on and of which I am the author. One is called Project Safe Childhood. The second is called the Schools SAFE Act. I introduced Project Safe Childhood a couple months ago after learning of a program at the Justice Department called Project Safe Childhood.

The Justice Department, in reviewing and seeing the incredible proliferation of child exploitation crimes, basically being proliferated through the Internet, took on a new program within the Department. This new program was in response to what we see of sexual predators on the Internet and with other types of sexual trafficking, again, as a result of the Internet and other places. They developed a program which is a very good program. It has five main purposes:

First, it seeks to integrate Federal, State, and local efforts and investigate and prosecute child exploitation cases.

Second, the project allows major case coordination between the Department of Justice and other appropriate Federal agencies.

Third, it increases Federal involvement in child exploitation cases by providing additional investigative tools and additional penalties that are available under Federal law that State and local governments may not have.

Four, the project provides increased training for Federal, State, and local law enforcement regarding the investigation and prosecution of computer-facilitated crimes against children.

Finally, it promotes community and educational programs to raise national awareness about the threat of online sexual predators and to provide information to families on how to report violations.

As the father of six children, I can tell you that what Senator BIDEN said about what parents used to feel they could do to protect children—locking doors and being with them—has gotten a lot more complex, with that fiber optic tube that runs into your house that allows the entire world to come crashing into your home and allows sick people to be able to prey on members of your family. We need to do more to educate parents. This is like pointing a loaded gun at your child, in many cases, and asking them to get on and play. This is a dangerous tool.

Yes, there are wonderful things on the Internet. There is a tremendous world of knowledge and adventure on the Internet. But as we know, too often the major traffic on the Internet is not those wonderful and informative sites. They are sites that prey on our failings and weaknesses, prey on the unsuspecting, on the innocent, in many cases. We as parents have to be better armed to deal with these people who want to reach into our homes and corrupt members of our families, corrupt everything that we are trying to teach them not to do and, worse yet, potentially could opt them into behavior that could risk, ultimately, their lives.

So this program is very important that the Justice Department is engaged in. I contacted the Department and worked with them to develop an authorization bill so we could provide a stable stream of funding for Project Safe Childhood and expand the program in a way that the Department on its own could not do.

For example, increasing penalties for registered sex offenders, child sex trafficking and sexual abuse, and other child exploitation crimes, which this does. It creates a children's safety online awareness campaign and authorizes grants for child safety programs. So in addition to what the Justice Department program does, we add those provisions to help with better coordination between State, local, and Federal prosecutors and investigators.

I had a meeting in the western district of Pennsylvania with our U.S. attorney, Mary Beth Buchanan, and State and local officials. They were talking about it—just the practical difficulties of assigning police and investigators and detectives and prosecutors on a local level and the support they need and the overlapping jurisdictional issues. So this will help them be able to create seamless teams of people to go after these child abusers, as well as to project into the community information that is important to prevent these crimes from happening.

So I am grateful that Senators SPECTER, HATCH, and LEAHY have worked to include that provision in the bill. I think it will take us a step forward in protecting our children from these predators and from exploitation.

The second piece of legislation is called the Schools SAFE Act. We spend a lot of time on the Senate floor talking about how we can improve the quality of education. But it almost goes without saying that when you drop your child off at school, at a bare minimum, you expect that the people who interact with them at school will not harm them. You would think that would be almost a given. But, unfortunately, in our country today we actually have a very poor system of checking as to whether people who are hired in schools are, in fact, safe for the children with whom they interact.

Obviously, the vast majority of teachers and people who work in schools are good and decent people and are there because they want to help children, not because they want to harm children. But like anything else, if you are someone who is a sexual predator, and you are looking to harm children, what better place to go than a place where there are children every single day you could possibly exploit.

So it is important that we have sufficient checks in place to make sure that these predators are not in educational settings where they can harm and corrupt our children.

The current state of play is basically a mishmash of different State laws and different participation in a system created to help schools access information about criminal background checks. Some States require, for example, only a State background check, while other States require an FBI background check. With these disparities, individuals continue to find opportunities to evade safeguards that have been put into place.

In Pennsylvania, an FBI background check is only required for individuals applying to schools for work and have lived in the Commonwealth for less than 2 years. So if you lived in the Commonwealth for several years and you committed a crime someplace else, Pennsylvania would not have the ability to check that out.

Beginning in 2007, Pennsylvania will require applicants who have lived in the Commonwealth for more than 2 years to also undergo FBI background checks.

So we are addressing that issue in Pennsylvania.

I think it just goes to show you that there is no good system out there. What we need to do is allow States to access a database that was established by Congress in 1998 in the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact. This compact allows States to share background information on individuals seeking employment in a school district. This is an important thing to have all the States participating in. I will not go through all of the problems, but there are all sorts of memoranda and agreements and data-sharing information. As a result of that, only roughly half of the States—26 States—participate in the compact. Even States that have joined the compact don't always get access to the information they need. This is a problem.

You could have a man from Pennsylvania who committed sex crimes in Pennsylvania and moved to Nevada. Nevada is a compact State. Nevada could do the compact based check of whether this person has committed crimes against children and find nothing, because Pennsylvania does not participate in the compact. So they could be hired in Nevada schools without any knowledge of the individual's problems in Pennsylvania.

This is obviously a great threat to our children. So what this bill does is give schools across our Nation an essential resource when making hiring decisions. They will be able to access this database and conduct fingerprint-based background checks on individuals who are seeking work with or around children in schools. So this is another important step in protecting our children, in addition to all of the other provisions in this bill—protecting our children in this case in our schools.

I thank, again, the chairman and ranking member for their tremendous assistance to me in getting this legislation in the final package. Again, I congratulate all who have been involved in this very important legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that 3 minutes be yielded to the Senator from Georgia, and then we go back to the Senator from North Dakota, and then to Senator ALLEN, and that would be it for now.

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

The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I thank the Senators for their courtesy. I thank Senator HATCH from Utah and his committee for incorporating in this very important bill provisions known as Masha's law. I was privileged to join, as an original cosponsor, with Senator KERRY on Masha's law.

Masha is a young lady who, at an early age in Russia, was adopted by an American citizen who became her custodian. He brought her to the United States and, systematically and over a protracted period of time, abused her and put her photographs over the Internet in enormous numbers. Masha, fortunately, after a sustained period of time, was able to escape his custody. A case was filed against him. He was indicted and convicted and today is incarcerated in Massachusetts.

Masha is, fortunately, now living in a loving home in Georgia and has a wonderful mother who is truly an angel of adoption in every way.

In researching this case, we found that young Masha, and many others like her who have been abused in their lives, could not even recover under the laws as they existed. What Masha's law does, and what is incorporated in here, is it changes ''any minor'' to ''any person,'' so that if a minor is depicted in photographs pornographically that are distributed over the Internet, but by the time the abuser is caught, the minor is an adult, they can still recover. They cannot now, and that is ridiculous. It makes sure that recovery on the part of a minor can take place when they become an adult, whether or not the guilty person is incarcerated. It raises from $50,000 to $150,000 the penalty for which that individual can be recompensated if, in fact, someone who depicts that picture and puts it on the Internet and uses them is caught and convicted. That compensation is to be paid to the individual.

Although I don't think there is any price too high to cost an individual who would take advantage of a minor, I think it is only appropriate to triple that penalty and make sure that reaching the age of adulthood does not exempt someone from recovery. It is a tribute to continuing to do what this bill does, and that is look after the protection of minors and ensure that those who violate them are caught and punished and have to pay to the maximum extent.

I thank the Senator from Utah for allowing me the time, and I thank the Senators from North Dakota and Virginia as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. First, let me say to the Senator from Utah, as well as to my colleague, the Senator from Delaware, that their leadership has been very important on this legislation. They will not know the names of those whose lives are saved, but lives will be saved because this legislation has passed. I very much appreciate their diligence and hard work.

This is a piece of legislation about protecting children. I don't know what is second place in the lives of many people, but I know what is in first place, and that is the protection of children. They cannot protect themselves. It is our responsibility as parents; it is our responsibility in this country to do the things necessary to protect our children. There are so many stories that it is almost hard to begin, and you don't know where to stop.

My interest in this goes back some long ways. My colleagues have described John Walsh and the tragic loss of his son Adam Walsh. Those of us who have lost children understand that pain, but it must be enormously compounded by the pain of someone who loses a child who has been abducted.

My experience, especially with respect to North Dakota, a couple of years ago was to learn one day that a wonderful young woman had been abducted in a parking lot of a shopping center in Grand Forks, ND, a young woman named Dru Sjodin, and, we later found, murdered.

There is a trial underway for someone charged with murder in that case, but that case is like so many cases, it seems to me. It is the case of Adam Walsh, it is the case of 9-year-old Jessica Lunsford, it is the case of a 12-year-old girl named Polly Klaas. It is the case of Sarah Michelle Lunde, age 13.

Pull back the curtain and then ask the question: Who is it abducting these children? Who are the sexual predators killing these children?

This is not some mystery. We know the answer to this. The answer is, in most cases, that these murders and these abductions are done by those who have been in our criminal justice system and who have abducted and murdered before.

I held a meeting in Fargo, ND, following the abduction of Dru Sjodin and the introduction of legislation I call Dru's law. What brings me to the floor of the Senate today is the components of Dru's law have been included in this legislation. So, finally, it will become law.

The Senate has passed Dru's law twice on its own. We have not gotten it

through the U.S. House. Now it will be through the U.S. House and Senate as a part of this Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, and it will become law.

A meeting I held in Fargo, ND, to discuss Dru's law is a meeting at which I showed this poster. This meeting was just over a year and a quarter ago now. I held the meeting at the city hall in Fargo, ND.

Prior to the meeting, I searched the computer for a registry of sex offenders to find out who was living within 1 mile of where we were meeting at city hall in Fargo, ND, who had previously been convicted as a sexual predator—who were they? I would share the names with the folks who came to that meeting to say: Here is a registry in North Dakota of sexual predators. There is no national registry; this is North Dakota's registry.

This is a poster that I showed the folks who came to Fargo that day as an example of someone who lived within a mile of where we were having the meeting. His name is Joseph Duncan, first-degree rape. He raped a 14-year-old boy at gunpoint, burned the victim with a cigarette, made the victim believe he was going to be killed by firing the gun twice on empty chambers; terminated from treatment; served a lengthy prison sentence; paroled, then absconded; had a long history of sexual aggression as a youth.

That is his sheet from the registry in North Dakota.

What I didn't know that day was that 1 month before the meeting I was having in Fargo, this same man had been charged with molesting a 6-year-old boy at a playground in Detroit Lakes, MN, just across the border. Someone in Minnesota checking the registry of sexual predators would not have found his name. He was just miles away living in Fargo, ND, but, in fact, he went over to Detroit Lakes, MN, and was charged with molesting a 6-year-old boy.

That is why we need a national registry. Strangely enough, in April of last year, he appeared on those charges, and a county judge set the bail at $15,000, and he was released after posting cash, promising to stay in touch, and he absconded and that is it. The judge said he didn't know he had this record.

Then 2 months later, this man we know now from intense media coverage was arrested in Idaho for kidnaping 8-year-old Shasta Groene and her brother, 9-year-old Dylan. The children had been missing for well over a month—2 months actually—when the bound and bludgeoned bodies of their mother, their older brother and their mother's boyfriend were found at their rural home. This man is now charged with three additional murders and the kidnaping of two children that he held and sexually abused for a number of months.

Dylan's remains were later located, and Shasta Groene, the young girl, was spotted in a Denny's restaurant by a sharp-eyed waitress who called the police, and she was saved.

This case is an example of why there must be a national registry.

Dru's law, which I introduced, has three components. One is the creation of a national registry of sex offenders. The underlying legislation improves on that by not only requiring the national registry but also standardizing the information that will be in the national registry.

Second, Dru's law requires that when a violent, high-risk sex offender is about to be released from incarceration, the local authorities must be notified, the local States attorney must be notified. There is such a high risk to the population of this high-risk offender being released that perhaps there is cause to seek additional civil incarceration, civil commitment, but they can't do that if they don't know about the impending release.

In fact, when a high-risk offender is released from prison, they can't just say: So long, good luck. That is exactly what happens in too many cases.

Martha Stewart is thrown in jail. They put Martha in jail for 6 months, and when she gets out of Federal prison, she gets out of Federal prison wearing an ankle bracelet, an electronic bracelet that allows law enforcement to track her whereabouts.

I can give you an example of a very violent sex offender let out of prison with no maintenance, no monitoring, no electronic bracelet, just: So long, see you later; you served your time. Yes, we will see them again when they create another violent crime, another rape, another murder, another abduction. That is why I support passing this kind of legislation.

This legislation is going to save lives. Again I ask the question, and it is so fundamental: If we send Martha Stewart home with an electronic bracelet on her ankle, we can't do that to violent sex offenders when the psychiatrists at the institute of incarceration have said, ''We believe this person to be at high risk for real offending''?

Nearly three-quarters of the violent sex offenders are going to repeat that offense when released from prison. We know that from statistics. Do we have an obligation to protect children? The answer is, you bet we do, and it is long past the time. That is why this legislation is so very important.

As I said when I started, there is so much here that is partisan in this Chamber and the other Chamber, and there is so much that swirls around all of us in politics that we don't like very much about today. But there are times when we do things that will make a difference, and we do things working together, Republicans and Democrats. This is one of those moments of which we can be proud.

Senator HATCH and Senator BIDEN did a wonderful job. They mentioned their staffs, and that is important. It is always the case that politicians take the bows, but it is important to understand that staff plays a very significant role in helping us write legislation, do the research to get it correct and get it passed.

I thank my colleagues, and I especially say to the parents of Dru Sjodin: I believe that in honor of her memory we have, in this legislation, done something significant. Section 120 is the Dru Sjodin national sex offender public Web site. We create the three elements in Dru's law in this legislation, and I believe, in her memory, we will save other lives.

There are many parents out there today who have lost children, some to the horror of abduction by sexual predators. If this legislation will—and I believe it will—prevent others from experiencing that horror, and if this legislation will—and I believe it will—save children, then we will have done significant work here tonight. It is perhaps little noticed by some. We don't have on legislation of this type perhaps filled Chambers and substantial attention to it, but while it is perhaps little known publicly, what transpires here in the Senate tonight will have a significant influence on the future of children in this country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CHAFEE). The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the distinguished Senator from Virginia speak next, but also after him, the distinguished Senator from Texas and then the distinguished Senator from Washington, Ms. CANTWELL.

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

The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, I rise this evening in strong support of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006. I commend Senator HATCH for his steadfast leadership, his wisdom, and perseverance in finally getting this measure to the floor for a vote. It is long overdue.

I have always believed that one of the very top, most important responsibilities of government at the Federal, State, or, for that matter, the local level is the safety and security of our people, particularly the most vulnerable people in our society—our children.

When I was Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, I made the protection of the people of Virginia, including our children, our top priority. We worked with the legislature to abolish the lenient, dishonest parole system in Virginia that was releasing criminals after serving as little as one-fifth of their sentence. We instituted truth in sentencing in Virginia, and by doing that, when you read in the newspaper or see in the news that a felon has gotten a 20-year sentence, he is serving 20 years, not 4 or 5 years to come back out and prey upon innocent law-abiding citizens again.

Clearly, the abolition of parole, truth in sentencing, and longer sentences for

felons has made Virginia safer. The crime rates are down, and there are tens of thousands of people who will not be victims of crime.

I am going to talk about Adam Walsh, but there are a lot of other victims of crimes. I remember when we were trying to get the legislature and people behind the abolition of parole and truth in sentencing, listening to the stories of loved ones, of parents who would tell their stories, of people released early and where they have preyed upon, killed, or raped again.

I will always remember a lady talking about being raped, and then right after her, another woman was talking about being raped again, a second time, by that same person. That rapist was released early.

I remember talking about a police officer with young children. The police officer was killed on Father's Day in Richmond by someone released early. The story of a young person working in the bakery in Richmond who was killed by someone released early. The story of a mother talking about a violent assault and then the smothering with a pillow of her daughter, and then having to go back to the parole board to recount why that criminal, that murderer, should not be released once again.

Before I became Governor in Virginia, pedophiles were serving an average of 3½ years in prison. Now, with the abolition of parole, and truth in sentencing, their sentences are 26 years rather than 3½ years. Not surprisingly, there are now fewer victims of crime in the Commonwealth of Virginia. However, there continue to be child predators who lurk in the shadows of our society.

Studies show that there are more than 550,000 registered sex offenders in the United States, and there are an estimated 100,000 sex offenders who are missing from the system. Loopholes in this current system have allowed some sexual predators to evade law enforcement and place our children at risk. That is why the national registry aspect of this bill is so important.

Some may wonder, why is there such a focus on sex offenders? Why is there such a focus on pedophiles and sex offenders and rapists? The reason is, if you look at the statistics—and it is not unique to Virginia; it is the way it is across this country—the highest recidivist rate, or the highest repeat offender rate of any crime—even higher than murderers, even higher than armed robbers—is sex offenders. That is why it is so important we have the registry. When someone is caught, first, they are getting a long sentence, and the best way to protect people is having these sex offenders behind bars rather than lurking in a parking garage or trying to lure young children. That is why the focus on sexual predators is so important, in that they have the highest repeat offender rate.

Now, these days, child predators have increased their ability to inflict harm on our children by exploiting new communications technologies, including the Internet. Please understand: I believe the Internet is the greatest invention since the Gutenberg press for the dissemination of information and ideas. It is a wonderful tool. And ever since I have been in the Senate, I have been working to make sure that avaricious State and local tax commissars don't impose 18-percent taxes on the Internet in monthly charges. We don't want the Internet monthly bills to look like a telephone bill. Ron Wyden from Oregon has been a good ally on this.

But the Internet also can create new opportunities for criminals, especially child predators. It is vitally important that we as parents and as elected leaders take the necessary steps to make the Internet as safe as possible for our children, as safe as possible for our children when they are at home, as safe as possible for them at schools, as well as in libraries.

I recently introduced a bill called the Internet Tax Nondiscrimination Act. This bill makes permanent the Internet tax moratorium, which is scheduled to expire next year. This measure also increases the ability of parents to protect their children from Internet predators. In fact, this is still law today. We want to keep this going.

In our bill, we impose a responsibility on Internet service providers to offer customers filtering technology. The ISPs, or Internet service providers, need to limit access to material that would be harmful to minors. This feature will create a powerful, and does create a powerful, financial incentive for ISPs to provide the filtering technology that parents need. Once parents are empowered with this technology, I guarantee you they will use it to protect their young sons and daughters. I am pleased the Senate Commerce Committee approved this bill as part of the telecom reform bill on a vote of 19 to 3.

However, we as a legislative body have much more work to do, especially when it comes to increasing penalties on Internet predators, by giving law enforcement officials the tools they need to catch Internet predators and convict them. This is a key reason I have signed on as a cosponsor of the Adam Walsh Act. This legislation is vitally needed. As I said, it should have been passed many years ago. This legislation honors the memory of a 6-year-old boy named Adam Walsh who was kidnapped and murdered nearly 25 years ago. This bill also recognizes the tireless efforts of his parents, John and Reve Walsh, who have been outstanding advocates for children all across America, in making sure we have some common sense when we are combating violent criminals.

The Adam Walsh Act—and I want to focus on one title—this bill in title 7 includes what is called the Internet Safety Act, sets out several provisions that will dramatically increase Internet safety, including tough new penalties for child exploitation enterprises and repeat sex offenders. This title also creates a new crime—and this is important—a new crime for embedding words or digital images on to the source code of a Web site with the intent to deceive a person into viewing this obscenity. This is vitally important for all people. I tell you, it is important for families and children. This section is going to help stop pornographers from tricking children into visiting their sites with words that are designed to attract innocent young people.

The Internet safety provisions in this measure also fund Federal prosecution resources, including 200 new Assistant U.S. Attorney positions to help prosecute persons for offenses related to sexual exploitation of children, and 45 more computer forensic examiners. These are the experts who will be helpful within the regional computer forensic laboratories in the Department of Justice. They include 10 more Internet Crimes Against Children task forces. These are also important. There is some good work being done in Bedford County, Virginia, in between Lynchburg and Roanoke. The sheriff, Mike Brown, in Bedford County has instituted Operation Blue Ridge Thunder which works on this, but the State and local folks can certainly use the assistance and help of the forensic experts and U.S. attorneys. After all, a lot of this is across State lines. All of these resources are absolutely necessary for the investigation and the prosecution of child sex offenses.

The Internet safety provisions in this bill also expand the civil remedy available to children who have been sexually abused and exploited.

This is vitally important, commonsense legislation that is going to protect and, indeed, it is going to save lives. It is perfect that we pass a bill named after Adam Walsh, a child who lost his life at age 6 to a child predator. It can be Adam Walsh, but to all the parents who are out there who lost a young child to a sexual predator, it can be their name put in here as well. The parents of Adam Walsh have dedicated their lives to making sure there are not other parents grieving with the loss of their son or their daughter. Adam's spirit lives on and the inspiration for action is in this measure, action that will save lives. More children will be able to grow up with the innocence they deserve and the safety they deserve, thanks to the efforts of Adam Walsh's parents and also the wisdom, on a bipartisan basis, of the Senate not to dawdle, but to act. I commend the Senate for acting, particularly those in the committee. I am honored to be a cosponsor, and I look forward to the passage of this act, the signing by the President, and the protection of children all across America.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I too rise to support the Adam Walsh Child

Protection and Safety Act of 2006. This act represents landmark, bipartisan legislation to protect the most vulnerable among us: our children. Over the last several months, the House and the Senate met, negotiated, and finally reached agreement on this important measure.

I want to note and, in doing so, commend the tremendous leadership Chairman SPECTER and Senator HATCH, our immediate past chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and their respective staffs, as well as the House Judiciary Committee chairman, JIM SENSENBRENNER and his staff, for all their tireless dedication to this legislation. Many people have devoted time and effort to see this bill through, ensuring that we do everything within our power to protect our children.

The crimes of child abuse and child exploitation are astounding but, unfortunately, all too prevalent. The recent wave of child abductions in this country demonstrates the need for this type of response from the Congress. There is only one way to deal with those who prey on children: They must be caught sooner, punished longer, and watched closer than they are today.

Before I came to the Senate, I was honored to serve as the chief law enforcement officer of the State of Texas as Texas attorney general. There, I instituted a new specialized unit known as the Texas Internet Bureau which was designed to coordinate and direct efforts to fight Internet crimes such as fraud, child pornography, and address privacy concerns, among others. As others here have noted, the Internet is a remarkable tool which has revolutionized the way we live, the way we communicate, and the way we receive information. The problem is, though, there is a dark underbelly to the Internet, and the Texas Internet Bureau was designed to specifically identify Internet predators who were then caught, prosecuted, convicted, and taken off the streets. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with my colleagues in the Senate to help continue on this important initiative and to make it available to more and more of our children and, thus, to make America a safer place for our children to grow up.

I want to take a moment to highlight another very important participant in these negotiations who has been noted and praised for his efforts, but I think we can't say enough to recognize his contribution. John Walsh has a longstanding commitment to fighting for child victims and measures to protect children across this country. As has been recounted, his son Adam Walsh was kidnapped from a mall in Florida and murdered in 1981. Since that day, John Walsh has dedicated his life to helping victims of crime, and he has been enormously successful and influential in doing so. It is only appropriate that this bill honors the inspiration he has given to us all in the life of his son Adam Walsh in the process.

As many of you know, John Walsh is the host of ''America's Most Wanted'' and has spent a lot of time and effort working on this bill. This is not the first time he has invested his efforts and expertise in helping Congress address child crime legislation. In the previous Congress, we passed legislation that included the Code Adam Act, which required Federal buildings to establish procedures for locating a child who is missing in Federal buildings.

The title of this current bill appropriately honors Mr. Walsh's efforts, and I am told the President will sign the bill, if we pass it, on July 27, marking the 25th year since the day Adam was abducted.

I do not pretend to understand the pain and trauma the Walsh family or others have had to endure as a result of these terrible crimes against children. But I am eternally grateful for the way John Walsh has used this pain and this trauma to improve the lives of other people and to ensure we take every step within our power to protect our children against like crimes committed against Adam Walsh.

I wish to take a second to highlight other important measures contained in the bill which will enhance existing laws, enhance investigative tools, criminal penalties, and child crime resources in a variety of ways. This bill requires sex offenders to register and, in the case of the most serious offenders, to do so for up to the length of their entire lives. It requires them to report in person at least once each year to update personal information and to take a new photograph. It requires public posting for public access on the Internet of information about sex offenders so it is widely available, and so parents can take steps necessary to protect their children. It forces States to comply with this program or, I should say, persuades them to comply with the program by linking participation to Byrne grant funding, and it punishes with imprisonment up to 10 years those who fail to register, and if they commit a violent crime while unregistered, they can be punished for up to 30 years consecutive to any underlying conviction. It requires the Attorney General of the United States to create Project Safe Childhood, which will integrate Federal, State, and local efforts to prosecute the crime of child exploitation. It increases punishments for any crime of violence against a child, and authorizes grants to States to implement these important programs, and provides them grants to do so.

It also includes many of the provisions of the Internet Safety Act which I cosponsored with Senator JON KYL and others which, among other things, creates a new crime outlawing child exploitation enterprises, and would imprison for a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 years those who act in concert to commit at least three separate violations of Federal child pornography, sex trafficking, or sexual abuse laws against multiple child victims. It also enacts various other important provisions, including making the failure to register as a sex offender a deportable offense for aliens and preventing sex offenders from taking advantage of our immigration laws.

This is one of those fine times in the U.S. Congress where we have come together on a bipartisan basis to do something that rises above partisanship and is enormously significant in terms of improving our quality of life and protecting those who are most vulnerable among us. This Congress continues to act on measures that benefit our Nation and protect our children. It has long been said that societies are ultimately judged on how they treat their elderly and their young. This bill is an important step toward improving the safety of those who are our youngest and most vulnerable.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to specifically express my gratitude to the many dedicated staff who worked tirelessly on this bill for some time, including Matthew Johnson and Lynden Melmed from my own staff. Additionally, I would like to thank the following staff:

Allen Hicks, Mike O'Neill, Matt Miner, Todd Braunstein, Brett Tolman, Lisa Owings, Bruce Artim, Ken Valentine, Tom Jipping, Dave Turk, Bradley Hayes, Joe Matal, Nicole Gustafson, James Galyean, Amy Blankenship, Jane Treat, Sharon Beth Kristal, Julie Katzman, Noah Bookbinder, Christine Leonard, Lara Flint, Marianne Upton, Preet Baharara, Melanie Looney, Anna Mitchell, Gabriel Adler, Alea Brown, Bradley Schreiber, Mike Volkov, Sean McLaughlin, Bobby Vassar, and Greg Barnes.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act. I thank the Senator from Utah for his leadership on this legislation over the last several years, and I thank his staff for their hard work and perseverance in pushing this legislation to the Senate floor tonight.

Last June, the entire Nation was horrified by the kidnapping and murders of the Groene family and the tragic crimes upon little Shasta Groene.

Joseph Duncan was a convicted sex offender who beat Brenda Groene; her 13-year-old son, Slade; and her boyfriend, Mark McKenzie to death. Their bodies were found in their home in Idaho on May 16, 2005. The killings captured the national headlines and prompted a massive search for the two Groene children, 8-year-old Shasta and her 9-year-old brother, Dylan.

Six weeks later, on July 2, restaurant workers in Idaho recognized Shasta and called the police. Dylan's remains were found later in western Montana.

This did not have to happen.

In 1980, Duncan was convicted of rape in Washington State. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison and began his sentence in a treatment program. After he was terminated from the program, he

served his sentence in prison until he was released on parole in 1994.

In 2000, he moved to Fargo, where he registered with the North Dakota Sex Offender Registry, but before long he had moved again and both the North Dakota and Washington State registries lost track of him.

In April of 2005, a Minnesota judge released Duncan on bail after he had been charged with child molestation.

Duncan promptly skipped town.

Minnesota issued a warrant for his arrest that May because he had not registered as a sex offender in that State, but by that time it was too late.

On May 16, the Groene family was found dead and it wasn't until July 2 that Shasta was recovered.

Joseph Duncan was essentially lost by three States. He moved from State to State to avoid capture.

No one knew where he was nor even how to look for him.

I say again, this did not have to happen.

There is no worse crime than a crime against a child, and one crime against a child is too many. That is why I have cosponsored the Child Protection Safety Act, because we need better information. We need a better system to keep that information accurate, and we need better standards to keep that system from breaking down when we need it most. The Senate must pass this bipartisan legislation to improve the national sex offender database, to link State tracking systems, and to prevent sex offenders from escaping and moving to other States.

Today there is far too much disparity among State registration requirements and notification obligations for sex offenders. Yes, there is already a National Registry, but it is based on often outdated listings from all 50 States. Worse, there are currently no incentives for offenders to provide accurate information, which helps to undermine the system.

Child sex offenders have exploited this stunning lack of uniformity, and the consequences have been tragic. Twenty percent of the Nation's 560,000 sex offenders are ''lost'' because State offender registry programs are not coordinated well enough.

We take these numbers very seriously in Washington State. In Washington State we have over 19,000 registered sex offenders and kidnaping offenders; more than 2,900 Washingtonians are currently incarcerated for these sex crimes. But we must be tough on these criminals because the national statistics are staggering.

One in five girls is estimated to be a victim of sexual assault. One in ten boys is estimated to be a victim. Only 35 percent of these cases are ever reported to the police. That is why this spring, Washington State passed a tough law that is new in mandating that sex offenders from other States must register with authorities within 3 days upon moving to Washington State. The previous law had been 30 days.

We also established a minimum sentence for certain sex crimes and tougher registration rules. Back in 1990 we were the first State to enact a sexual predator involuntary commitment law that ensures predators who are about to be released after serving their time can be prevented from being released if mental health officials believe that they will endanger the community.

This law has become a national model for other States to follow. Today, these sexual predators are housed on McNeil Island where they cannot hurt our children.

Here is what I know. Local law enforcement needs the tools and information that this legislation will give them to defend our children. It will help us close the gap between Federal and State sex offender registration and notification programs. Every State needs to update one another and the national registry in real time, and we need to recognize that tough punishment today will prevent terrible costs tomorrow.

We must keep our communities safe, and I know that is why the Senate is going to act on this legislation tonight. The Adam Walsh Protection and Safety Act creates this registry on a national level that is so long overdue. It provides strong, practical tools for law enforcement The new registry will expand the scope and duration of sex offender registration and notification requirements. It will keep track of all sex offender information—addresses, employment, vehicle, and other related information. And, as my colleague from North Dakota talked about, with his hard work, it also has a national sex offender Web site registry, the new Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Web site, so that every American can stay informed.

Now the public will be able to search for sex offender information by geographic radius and zip code, and the bill also, as my colleague from Texas just mentioned, increases the penalties for violent sex crimes against America's children.

It requires that the sex offenders register prior to their release from prison or supervised programs.

America needs this legislation. I am so proud of my colleagues in joining in a bipartisan effort to give law enforcement the tools they need to protect our families and our communities. Let's give them the information and the resources they need to get tough with sex offenders. Let's pass the Adam Walsh Child Protection Safety Act to not only honor John Walsh and his family, but also for all those who have been victims of this hideous crime, and to show that we are willing to work together to be aggressive in taking action and helping to make America safe for our children.

I will yield the floor.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise today to support the Adam Walsh Child Protection Safety Act of 2006, H.R. 4472. I say that as an Arkansan because I know people in Arkansas want to protect our children. I say that as a former attorney general because I know we worked with John Walsh and other people who dealt with missing and exploited children all over the country. We tried to be as active as possible in the attorney general's office in Arkansas. Thirdly, and most important, I say it as a father because I want my children protected like everybody else here and everybody around the country who wants their children protected.

Senator FRIST made a statement a few moments ago about child predators on the Internet. It is a real problem. It is something we in the Congress are trying to deal with in this legislation. It is something we need to keep focused on even though we passed this legislation. We need to keep focused on it so we can make sure that what we have on the books works. I am very proud of the Senate tonight for considering this. I am very proud of the Congress for the way they have handled this and moved this through the process.

I also wish to say another word. There is a program around the country called Code Adam. Actually, an Arkansas company started this—Wal-Mart—several years ago, where they have a little blue sticker on the door of every Wal-Mart. They do a Code Adam procedure in the store if a child is reported missing in the store. I cannot tell you how many children have been saved in Wal-Marts but also in other retail stores that use Code Adam. Wal-Mart has given this idea to anybody who wants to do it. It has worked and it has probably saved dozens, if not hundreds, of children. It is named after Adam Walsh because he was abducted and murdered several years ago.

Lastly, my friend, Colleen Nick, whom I met through my time in the attorney general's office in Arkansas—her daughter Morgan Nick was abducted from a ballfield in Alma, AR, several years ago when Morgan was about 5 years old. Colleen has devoted her life to missing children issues. So I am proud that this passed tonight for Morgan and Colleen and the Nick family because I have talked to them and spent a lot of time with the Nicks. I know the void it creates in a parent's life and in a family's life when one of their children is missing and never found.

Mr. President, I am very proud to support this legislation. I believe it makes America better, stronger, and it puts some teeth in the law that we need. It is something of which we can all be proud.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this bill and am even prouder that we have been able to work across party lines and in both Houses to come up with a bill that we all can support and that will genuinely help protect our children from sexual predators.

My commendations and heartfelt sympathy go out to John and Révé Walsh, Mark Lunsford, and all the other parents and loved ones of children who were taken so violently from those who loved them so dearly. Without the tireless efforts of these folks, this bill might not be on the floor here today, as we near the 25-year mark of the disappearance and murder of Adam Walsh.

The urgency of passing this legislation is clear. The murders of Jessica Lunsford, Sara Lunde, Tiffany Souers, and Jetseta Gage, who was from my home State of Iowa, have been thoroughly covered in the news in recent times. Each of these murders was committed by a repeat sex offender. These cases should open our eyes to the necessity of passing a bill that will protect children from monsters who commit these crimes and ensure that those who do commit the crimes will receive tougher penalties.

As I mentioned, Jetseta Marrie Gage was from my home State of Iowa. I would like to take a moment to talk about the beautiful 10-year-old girl who was sexually assaulted and murdered last year.

On March 24, 2005, Jetseta went missing from her home. Within 12 hours of her disappearance, even before a body had been found, law enforcement officials took Roger Bentley into custody.

Bentley had been previously convicted for committing lascivious acts with a minor. Unfortunately, this man only served a little over 1 year in prison for his previous sex crime conviction. Two days later, due to a tip received by a woman responding to the Amber Alert, Jetseta's body was found stuffed in a cabinet in an abandoned mobile home. She had been sexually molested and suffocated with a plastic bag. I can't help but wonder whether Jetseta would still be alive today had her killer received stricter penalties for his first offense. It breaks my heart to hear about cases like this, but it is even more disheartening when you know that it might have been prevented with adequate sentencing and that hers is just one tragic story in a long list of horrific crimes committed every year.

Child sex offenders are the most heinous of all criminals. I can honestly tell you that I would just as soon lock up all the child molesters and child pornography makers and murderers in this country and throw away the key. As it should all of us, the thought of what these predators do to our innocent children literally makes me sick to my stomach. The thought that we might not do what we could to deter them but also to prevent the same people from committing the same crimes against other children is unacceptable. According to a study funded by the Department of Justice, 5.3 percent of sex offenders were rearrested within 3 years following their release for another sex crime. Also, compared to non-sex offenders released from State prisons, released sex offenders were four times more likely to be rearrested for a sex crime. Even more troubling, according to several federally funded studies, child molesters have an even higher rate of rearrest than rapists.

Three years ago, we passed the PROTECT Act, a bill I worked on with my colleagues to provide the judiciary with the necessary tools to ensure that our children and grandchildren grow up in a safe community, free from child predators. This bill complements the process we started with the PROTECT Act, and adds much needed additional protections for children and for our communities.

The bill before us today includes parts of the Jetseta Gage Prevention and Deterrence of Crimes Against Children Act, a bill that I introduced last year to strengthen penalties for criminals who commit sex offenses against children. It ensures that those who commit heinous crimes against our children are appropriately punished and that anyone thinking of committing similar crimes will think twice about the repercussions. The bill increases penalties for sexual offenses against children, including sexual abuse, murder, kidnapping, sex trafficking, and various activities relating to the production and dissemination of child pornography.

This bill goes far beyond these penalty increases, however. It establishes sex offender registration and notification requirements, essential to aid parents in monitoring their children's environments. It strengthens child pornography prevention laws and sets up grants, studies, and other programs for the safety of children and communities. It delves into Internet crimes, an area that is becoming increasingly important in light of the dangers posed to children and the lack of knowledge on the part of parents, which hampers their ability to protect their children. My good friend from Arizona, Mr. KYL, introduced the bill this section is based on and which I cosponsored.

As the elected representatives of the American people, our foremost duty is to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Child rapes and murders are now being reported on our news programs on a regular basis. We have the power to prevent so many of these crimes by creating stronger deterrents and letting parents know where these sex offenders lurk after they are released. When crimes are committed, the least we can do is ensure that the rapists and murderers won't get the opportunity to hurt another child.

It is a tragedy that it took so many stories like those of Adam Walsh, Jetseta Gage, and Jessica Lunsford for a law of this nature to be proposed. I strongly believe that a vote for this bill can save the lives of children in the future. We have an obligation as legislators to protect our citizenry. We have an obligation as adults to protect our youth. We have an obligation as parents to protect our children. I urge my colleagues to join me in doing just that by voting in favor of this bill.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, the Congress will soon pass important legislation that will better protect children around the country from those who seek them harm. The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, H.R. 4472, named after the son of John and Revé Walsh who was killed in Florida almost 25 years ago, is the toughest and most comprehensive sex offender bill in recent years.

This legislation includes a number of changes to safeguard children, including tougher sentences for crimes committed against children, a publicly accessible national database of sex offenders, and a Federal requirement for convicted sex offenders to register their locations with law enforcement officials. The bill also includes a provision, which I authored, to track released sex offenders.

Sadly, events of the recent past highlight the need for us to know the location of convicted sexual offenders if they are released back into our communities.

In my State of Florida, two young girls, Jessica Lunsford and Sarah Lunde, were both murdered by convicted sex offenders within weeks of each other in 2005.

Jessica Lunsford of Homosassa, FL, was a 9-year-old girl who was abducted from her home, raped, and then buried alive by a convicted sex offender who lived 150 feet from her home. Law enforcement had lost track of him and they did not know that he worked at the school that Jessica attended, despite his being a registered sex offender. A few weeks later, 13-year-old Sarah Lunde of Ruskin, FL, was murdered by her mother's ex-boyfriend. He is also a convicted sex offender.

In response to these tragic events, Florida enacted a law that provides tougher sentences for child sex offenders and aids law enforcement in effectively monitoring those sex offenders. The law requires sex offenders, released back into our communities, to wear a device to allow authorities to track them via a global positioning system.

My provision in the Adam Walsh Act provides Jessica Lunsford and Sarah Lunde grants to aid States and local government in purchasing electronic monitoring systems, such as global positioning systems, that will provide law enforcement with real time information on the whereabouts of sex offenders released from prison to within 10 feet of their location. Law enforcement will be able to restrict the movements of sex offenders by programming these systems to alert authorities if a sex offender goes to a park, amusement park, elementary school or other areas determined to be off limits. The ankle bracelets used to monitor their movements are tamperproof and will alert law enforcement in the event that an offender has removed it so law enforcement can immediately act to apprehend the offender.

The grants will provide a total of $15 million to State and local government to help implement laws in order to get tougher on sex offenders released back into their communities with electronic monitoring technology. The bill will provide for $5 million in grants for fiscal years 2007 through 2009. The bill then directs the Attorney General to provide a report to Congress assessing the effectiveness of the program and making recommendations as to future funding levels.

In the United States, there are an estimated 380,000 registered sex offenders, although thousands have disappeared, according to authorities. We have over 30,000 of these sex offenders in the State of Florida. Laws, such as the one in Florida, and the Adam Walsh Act, which will be passed by Congress, are necessary to protect our children. I believe it is important that the Federal Government be appropriately supportive of State and local governments that are addressing this problem. To be effective, tough laws on sexual predators of children must be properly funded, and I believe these tough laws being passed by Federal and State legislatures are worth properly funding when they will protect our children.

Children are our most important treasure and protecting them is one of our most sacred responsibilities. I hope this bill will serve as a living memorial to all the children and serve as some comfort to their families. I hope the Jessica Lunsford and Sarah Lunde grants provided in this bill will allow law enforcement to help prevent other families from suffering similar tragedies.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today the Senate passed the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, which will help prevent the child exploitation by, among other things, creating a national system for the registration of sex offenders. Included in this legislation is a very important provision that I authored with Senator ISAKSON called Masha's Law. Masha's Law is named after a very brave 13-year-old girl—a Russian orphan who was adopted by a Pennsylvania man at the age of 5 and sexually exploited from the moment she was placed in his care. Masha suffered unspeakable atrocities in the hands of her abusive father, a man with a history of child exploitation. She continues to suffer as photographs of this abuse, taken by her father and posted on the Internet, are downloaded every day. Yet Masha does not cower in fear. She is taking a stand. She is using her experiences to demonstrate why the law must change. And it is because of her that we are now closing unacceptable loopholes in our child exploitation laws.

Masha's photographs are among the most commonly downloaded images of child pornography. Law enforcement estimates that 80 percent of child pornography collections contain at least one of her photographs. In fact, it was the high volume of images being distributed by this one individual that raised suspicions and led law enforcement officials to the home of Masha's adopted father. While he is currently in jail accused of sexual abuse and facing Federal charges, the damage to Masha continues every day as her pictures continue to be downloaded. Masha has sought compensation through a little used provision in the Child Abuse Victims' Rights Act of 1986 that provides statutory damages for the victims of sexual exploitation. Nothing will ever compensate Masha for the horrific experiences she has had, but the penalties provided in current law are embarrassingly low—they are one-third of the penalty for downloading music illegally.

According to the Center for Missing and Exploited Children, child pornography has become a multibillion dollar Internet business. With the increasingly sophisticated technology of digital media, child pornography has become easier to produce, transfer, and purchase. We are not doing enough to deter those who post and download child pornography.

Masha's Law would do two things; first it would increase the civil statutory damages available to a victim of child exploitation; and second, it would ensure that victims of child pornography whose images remain in circulation after they have turned 18 can still recover when those images are downloaded. The injuries do not cease to exist simply because the victim has turned 18. They continue and so should the penalties.

These changes are long overdue. I am proud that the Senate has passed this important legislation, and I am grateful to Masha for having the courage to stand up and make her voice heard.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I am proud to be a cosponsor of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, which provides law enforcement officers with several important tools to protect our children. In the past three decades, we have all seen and heard about the many tragic cases of children being assaulted and killed by sex offenders. These are absolutely horrifying events, and as legislators, we have an obligation to do all we can to prevent such crimes in the future. We need to improve and enhance sex offender registration and tracking laws and increase penalties for those who violate them, which this act will accomplish.

There are several prongs to this act, which is what will make it successful. The core of this bill establishes a national sex offender registry. Although each State has a registry, there are no uniform standards. There is no easy way to access information from different jurisdictions. This act creates a uniform Federal standard which divides offenders into tiers, depending upon the offense for which they were convicted. It establishes registration guidelines for each tier, including how long a person would need to be registered and how often he or she must come in for a personal verification of the registration information. The act also creates community notification requirements and will make it a felony for sex offenders to fail to register and update their information on a regular basis. The Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Web site will allow the public to search for information on sex offenders by ZIP Code and geographic radius.

All of these changes will help make our tracking laws more effective and will allow parents and members of the local community to be vigilant about the potential dangers of sex offenders in their neighborhoods.

But before we can put a predator can appear on the registry, he needs to be caught and prosecuted. The Adam Walsh Act includes urgently needed resources to assist law enforcement in these endeavors. This act establishes 10 new task forces dealing with Internet crimes against children, 45 new computer forensic examiners to deal exclusively with child sexual exploitation, and 200 new Federal prosecutors—all designated to combat child sexual exploitation.

This act also tries to protect children from being victimized in the first place. It provides grant money for educating parents and children about those who use the Internet to prey upon children. It funds Big Brothers and Big Sisters and includes my bill for the reauthorization of the Police Athletic Leagues. These two programs provide kids with supervision and role models and mentors who can help protect them from predators. In addition, it mandates that potential foster and adoptive parents go through a thorough criminal background check before a child can be placed with them.

Also incorporated in this bill are aspects of the Internet Safety Act which I proudly cosponsored. These include establishing new criminal penalties to keep up with the constantly increasing level of depravity among pedophiles—for example, the child exploitation enterprises provision to prosecute the ''molestation on demand'' child pornographic industry that has sprung up in recent years. Sexual predators of children are among the worst kind of offenders, and it is only right that there are sentencing enhancements for registered sex offenders who reoffend.

This is a good piece of legislation. I am pleased so many of my colleagues support it, and I look forward to its pending passage.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, in May, the Senate passed the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act to standardize and strengthen registration and monitoring of sex offenders nationwide. Since its passage, the House and Senate have worked closely to resolve their differences and to improve the overall quality of the legislation. The bill before us today contains difficult compromises, but it has achieved that goal.

This legislation is critically important to safeguard victims of sexual abuse from harm. It will help protect innocent people from violent offenses. It recognizes the victims and all the suffering both they and their families have endured.

With this legislation, we are recognizing the loss of Molly Bish from Warren, MA. At 16, Molly was abducted from her position as a lifeguard, and her family endured terrible uncertainty until her remains were found 3 years later. Molly was a typical teenager who took great joy from life. Her nickname was Tigger, because she was always on the move. She is survived by her parents, John and Magi Bish; her sister, Heather; and her brother, John, Jr., who work every day to keep children safe, honoring her life and her legacy.

With this bill, we also remember with sadness another Massachusetts resident, Alexandra Zapp. Ally was 30 years old when she was attacked and murdered in a public restroom by a repeat sex offender in Bridgewater, MA, in 2002. Ally's friends described her as a strong, smart, and independent woman. She had worked at the USA Sailing Association of Portsmouth, RI, where she was a keelboat training coordinator. Ally is survived by her mother and sister, Andrea and Caroline, and her father and stepmother, Ray and Linda. This legislation is dedicated to her memory, along with the memories of Molly Bish and the many other victims of terrible crimes.

Several changes have been made to this legislation as a result of our work with the House. It is important to make sure that information on offenders who pose a potential threat is available to the public at large, and this bill provides for Internet listing and community notification about such individuals.

At the same time, in order for the registry to be effective, it should be targeted toward those who present the highest risk to our communities. The current version takes a more sweeping approach toward juvenile offenders by expanding their registration requirements. The Senate bill allowed each State to determine whether a juvenile should be included on the registry. This compromise allows some offenders over 14 to be included on registries, but only if they have been convicted of very serious offenses. For juveniles, the public notification provision in this bill is harsh given their low rate of recidivism, which is less than 8 percent according to the most recent studies. For this reason, it is especially important that the bill includes funding for treatment of juvenile offenders. These provisions recognize that juvenile offenders, who have much lower rates of recidivism and have been shown to be much more amenable to treatment than their adult counterparts, shouldn't be lumped together with adult offenders.

The bill also provides increased funding for programs to prevent these offenses before they occur. It also authorizes funding for sex offender treatment and management within the Federal prison system. These provisions will be helpful in reducing the future risks to society by convicted sex offenders. If Congress is serious about addressing this problem, it must commit itself to fully funding the legislation.

All States currently have registration requirements for sex offenders, but this bill will create a system of national tracking and accountability that preserves the ability of individual States to provide additional procedures to assure the accuracy and usefulness of the registries.

Massachusetts has a system that works. We are already doing most of what this bill requires, but our system goes beyond these basic requirements by providing individualized risk assessments of each sex offender who goes on the registry. These individual assessments, combined with hearings allowing offenders to challenge their classification, help ensure that States like Massachusetts can provide the highest quality of information on potential threats to the community while respecting the tremendous impact that community notification can have on offenders' lives. I am pleased that this legislation respects the right of individual States to innovate in this area and does not penalize States who go the extra mile to improve their registries.

For this reason, section 125 of the compromise is very important. Each State will face challenges in the implementation of these new Federal requirements, and States should not be penalized if exact compliance with the act's requirements would place the State in violation of its constitution or an interpretation of the State's constitution by its highest court.

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has concluded that offenders are entitled to procedural due process before being classified at a particular risk level and before personal information about them is disseminated to the public. Massachusetts has been vigilant in implementing a comprehensive and effective sex offender registry, and it should not lose much needed Federal funding where there is a demonstrated inability to comply with certain provisions of this new Federal law.

No State should be penalized and lose critical Federal funding for law enforcement programs as long as reasonable efforts are under way to implement procedures consistent with the purposes of the act. It is essential that the Federal Government continue to collaborate and to provide support for State and local governments, including the prevention, intervention, and enforcement of antigang and antidrug activities as a result of this bill.

At the same time, the new mandatory minimum sentences in the act aren't justified by any empirical data or sound policy. Mandatory minimums prevent prosecutors and judges from doing what they do best—making individual determinations on sentencing, based on the circumstances of individual cases. With more than 2 million Americans in prison or jail—including 12 percent of all African-American men between the ages of 20 and 34—no one can seriously argue that there is an epidemic of leniency in Federal sentencing. This latest batch of mandatory minimums undermines more than two decades of legislative work devoted to striking a sensible balance between consistent sentencing and the need to provide judges with the discretion to make sure each sentence fits the crime.

Although it is important to have strong penalties for crimes against children, I have major reservations about the broad expansion of the death penalty in this compromised legislation. It is clear that continued imposition of the death penalty will inevitably lead to the wrongful execution of more and more people. Justice Marshall, in particular, wrote powerfully on this issue. He believed that if our citizens knew the truth about the death penalty, ''its disproportionate imposition on racial minorities and the poor, its utter failure to deter crime, and the continuing likelihood of executing the innocent,'' it would be rejected as morally reprehensible.

Last year, the Supreme Court struck down the death penalty for juveniles—persons 17 years old or younger. The Court's ruling was significant. It was long past time to erase that stain from our human rights record. The basic injustice of the death penalty is obvious. Experience shows that imposition of the death penalty inevitably leads to wrongful executions. Many of us are concerned about the racial disparities in the imposition of capital punishment and the wide disparities in the State in its application. The unequal, unfair, arbitray, and discriminatory use of the death penalty is completely contrary to our Nation's commitment to fairness and equal justice for all, and we need to do all we can to correct this fundamental flaw.

Finally, the national registry of substantiated cases of child abuse in this bill should not be implemented until Congress has a full understanding of its scope and effectiveness. The proposed registry raises serious implementation challenges and could create an additional and unnecessary burden for States. Not all States maintain the same registry information, and most States maintain different rules on disclosure. Tribal entities, which are included in this proposed registry, currently maintain no registries at all.

I am concerned that this registry raises serious privacy concerns by including information on cases without the opportunity for due process. For this reason, it is important that the study on establishing data collection standards be completed before such a

registry is established. Current standards for inclusion in child abuse registries vary greatly, with some requiring credible evidence and others requiring no standard other than the judgment of the case worker.

During the most recent reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, we improved current child abuse systems to ensure that law enforcement has the information it needs to pursue and prosecute cases.

A new provision was added to require States to ''disclose confidential information to any Federal, State, or local government entity, or any agent of such entity, which has a need for such information in order to carry out its responsibilities under law to protect children from abuse and neglect.'' Rather than developing additional registries and reporting requirements, States need Federal assistance to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities under CAPTA. I am concerned that this new registry will have limited value in improving or standardizing State recordkeeping for child abuse and neglect cases.

Despite these provisions, I commend the work that has been done on this bill. Without further delay, it is important that we get this bill to the President so that it can be signed on July 27th, the 25th anniversary of the abduction of Adam Walsh, and to honor all of the work his parents have done in his memory to protect children in communities across the country.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, the foundation of democracy lies in a government that reflects the voice of its citizens. The Constitution, the beloved document that chartered our system of government, makes this clear. ''We the people'', are the very first words of our Constitution: ''We the people.'' This is no mistake, for our Founders sought to create a government that would reflect the will of those who send us here.

Voting is the underpinning of our democratic process. In an address to Congress, President Lyndon B. Johnson said that, ''In a free land where men move freely and act freely, the right to vote freely must never be obstructed.'' With the act of casting one's ballot, each citizen has ensured a place in the democratic process, fulfilling the civic responsibility that each and every one of us must safeguard and cherish. All citizens deserve this right, and all should utilize it.

Like so many worthwhile initiatives, safeguarding the freedoms of democracy can sometimes exact a heavy toll. Wars have been fought on our own soil to ensure these freedoms, and our country's history has been blemished with the events of a less enlightened time. But even through strife and toil, our democracy emerged intact, our Republic strengthened by the sacrifices made by the citizens who fought for equality and the right to vote.

I met yesterday with Mr. James Tolbert, President of the West Virginia NAACP, and other members of the West Virginia NAACP delegation. They were here in Washington D.C. as part of a national effort to spearhead the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. I was proud to assure them of both my cosponsorship of the measure and my support for the reauthorization.

While the various reauthorizations of the Voting Rights Act have forged the pathway to the polls for all Americans, the ability to vote is but half of the process. Democracy works best when the people are vigilant in protecting of their rights, and engage in the electoral process. Our democracy is strongest when there is free and open access to the polls for everyone, and when the people embrace the vote as both a right and a responsibility.

Indeed, the decades that have followed the initial passage of the Voting Rights Act have witnessed the progress of our Nation. To continue in our efforts, we have only to look to past successes for inspiration. To be ardent in the defense of our democracy is to preserve it for the generations to come.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to speak in strong support of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006. This bill will strengthen our power to keep America's children safe from sexual predators and creates the National Sex Offender Registry, which will keep track of all sex offender information nationwide. It will also create the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Web site, so that every American will have the ability to search for information on potential sexual predators in their own community.

I have had a personal interest in children's welfare and child-safety issues for many years, predating my time in the Senate, in fact. Before being elected to this Chamber, I served as judge-executive of Jefferson County, KY, from 1977 to 1984. Jefferson County contains Louisville, my hometown, and the judge-executive position was the county's chief executive.

In 1981, we hosted in Louisville the first-ever national conference on rescuing missing and exploited children. Ernie Allen, who was on my staff at the time and organized the conference, is today the head of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. And that conference was keynoted by John Walsh. At the time, Mr. Walsh was not yet the television fixture and hero to millions of parents he is today but a private citizen whose 6-year-old son, Adam, had been tragically kidnapped and murdered earlier that same year.

That event began a decades-long friendship between John and me, centered around this issue. Together, we lobbied Congress—and I remind you, I was not yet a Senator at this time—for legislation that would create a nationwide organization to track missing kids. In 1984, our efforts bore fruit, and President Ronald Reagan signed the bill creating the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children as a public-private partnership.

I believe government must do all it can to support groups such as the NCMEC and others and our law enforcement agencies in their efforts to find missing children, return them to their families, and shield them from sexual predators. The work these groups do is vital to protecting families, and I applaud their dedication and compassion.

Passage of this bill will further the mission of comforting parents everywhere and protecting our children. The National Sex Offender Registry will contain up-to-date data on all sex offenders nationwide, and there are harsh penalties for any offender who does not register.

The bill imposes tougher penalties for sex offenses and violent crimes against children. It also allows for civil commitment procedures for any sex offenders who demonstrate while incarcerated that they cannot be trusted to be unleashed on society.

The bill addresses child exploitation over the Internet with stringent Internet safety provisions. It also contains several worthy programs, grants, and studies to address child and community safety.

I would especially like to note that the bill strengthens the pornography recordkeeping and labeling requirements passed by Congress in 1988 to protect children from exploitation by pornographers. These provisions were originally part of S. 2140, the Protecting Children from Sexual Exploitation Act of 2005, sponsored by my good friend from Utah, Senator HATCH.

I was pleased to join him as a cosponsor of that bill and am doubly pleased now to see these provisions included in this bill, which I feel confident in saying will soon reach the President's desk and receive his signature.

Finally, the portion of this legislation that parents may find the most comforting is the creation of the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Web site. Parents will now have the power to search for sex offenders in their own community. The good that can come from this power to arm parents with the right information cannot be measured.

I ask my colleagues to join me in commending John Walsh for his commitment to this important issue. His drive to see that the tragedy that befell his own family does not fall on another has not diminished in the 25 years I have known him. I am glad that we can honor John by naming this important legislation after his beloved son.

Those who would prey on the weakest among us—our children deserve to feel the full weight of the law brought down on them. It is hard to imagine a crime that does more to destroy families or dreams of a bright future. This legislation will ensure that kids, parents, and law enforcement agencies have the tools they need to fight child predators and sexual criminals. For that reason, I am proud to support its passage.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I rise today to comment on the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act. This legislation will create a national sex offender registry that will make it possible for law enforcement and concerned citizens to track sexual predators. The bill also includes tough penalties that will ensure that these individuals will actually register. There currently are over 100,000 sex offenders in this country who are required to register but are ''off the system.'' They are not registered. The penalties in this bill should be adequate to ensure that these individuals register. In addition to allowing up to 10 years in prison for an offender who fails to register, the bill also imposes a mandatory 5 years in prison for an offender who has neglected his obligation to register and commits a crime of violence.

I would like to focus my remarks on legislation that I have introduced that has been incorporated in this final bill. I am particularly pleased to see that the bill maintains the ChildHelp National Registry of Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect. Section 663 of the bill instructs the Department of Health and Human Services to create a national registry of persons who have been found to have abused or neglected a child. The information will be gathered from State databases of child abuse or neglect. It will be made available to State child-protective-services and law-enforcement agencies ''for purposes of carrying out their responsibilities under the law to protect children from abuse and neglect.'' The national database will allow States to track the past history of parents and guardians who are suspected of abusing their children. When child-abusing parents come to the attention of authorities—when teachers begin to ask about bruises, for example—these parents often will move to a different jurisdiction. A national database would allow the State to which these parents move to know the parents' history. It will let a child-protective-services worker know, for example, whether he should prioritize investigation of a particular case because the parent has been found to have committed substantiated cases of abuse in the past in other States. Such a database also would allow a State that is evaluating a prospective foster parent or adoptive parent to learn about past incidents of child abuse that the person has committed in other States.

I am also proud to see that the Internet SAFETY Act, which I introduced with several colleagues earlier this year, has been incorporated as title VII of this bill. This title includes the following important provisions:

Section 701 makes it a criminal offense to operate a child exploitation enterprise, which is defined as four or more persons who act in concern to commit at least three separate violations of Federal child pornography, sex trafficking, or sexual abuse laws against multiple child victims. This offense is punished by imprisonment for 20 years up to life.

Section 702 provides that if an individual who is required to register as a sex offender under Federal or State law commits specified Federal offenses involving child pornography, sex trafficking, or sexual abuse against a minor victim, the offender shall be imprisoned for 10 years in addition to any penalty imposed for the current offense.

Section 703 makes it a criminal offense to embed words or digital images into the source code of a Web site in order to deceive people into viewing obscenity on the Internet. Offenses targeting adults are subject to up to 10 years imprisonment; offenses targeted at child victims are subject to up to 20 years imprisonment.

Section 704 authorizes appropriations for the U.S. Attorney General to hire 200 additional Assistant United States Attorneys across the country to prosecute child pornography, sex trafficking, and sexual abuse offenses targeted at children.

Section 705 authorizes appropriations for the hiring of 30 additional computer forensic examiners within the Justice Department's Regional Computer Forensic Laboratories, and 15 additional computer forensic examiners within the Department of Homeland Security's Cyber Crimes Center. The additional computer forensic examiners will be dedicated to investigating crimes involving the sexual exploitation of children and related offenses.

Section 706 authorizes the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to create 10 additional Internet Crimes Against Children, ICAC, Task Forces.

Finally, section 707 of the Internet SAFETY title expands the civil remedies for sexual offenses by allowing the parents of a minor victim to seek damages, and by allowing a minor victim to seek damages as an adult.

Title II of today's bill also includes a number of penalty increases and other improvements to Federal criminal sex offenses. Many of these provisions appeared in the Internet SAFETY Act, as well as in the Jetseta Gage Act, which was introduced by Senator GRASSLEY in 2005 and of which I was an original cosponsor. Section 211 suspends the statute of limitations for all Federal felony offenses of sexual abuse, sex trafficking, or child pornography. Other provisions of title II increase penalties for coercion and enticement by sex offenders, conduct relating to child prostitution, aggravated sexual abuse, sexual abuse, abusive sexual contact, sexual abuse of children resulting in death, and sex trafficking of children. Title II also makes sexual abuse offenses resulting in death eligible for the capital punishment, and expands the predicate offenses justifying mandatory repeat-offender penalties for offenses involving child pornography and depictions of the sexual exploitation of children. Finally, title II adds sex trafficking of children to the set of repeat offenses that are subject to mandatory life imprisonment.

Another provision that I have pursued during this Congress and that is included in this final bill is section 212, which extends several of the guarantees of the 2004 Crime Victims' Rights Act to Federal habeas corpus review of State criminal convictions. Because such cases involve Federal courts but State prosecutors, this extension is limited to those provisions of CVRA that are enforced by a court—Congress cannot compel State prosecutors to enforce a Federal statute. The victims' rights extended by section 212 to Federal habeas proceedings are the right to be present at proceedings, the right to be heard at proceedings involving release, plea, sentencing, or parole, the right to proceedings free from unreasonable delay, and the right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy.

The bill also makes some technical improvements to the DNA Fingerprint Act, which Senator CORNYN and I introduced last year and which was enacted into law as an amendment to the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act at the beginning of this year. Section 155 of today's bill modifies the authority granted to the Federal Government by the DNA Fingerprint Act to collect DNA samples from Federal arrestees. Under current law, the Federal Government may collect a DNA sample from any person arrested for a Federal offense, but the authority to collect DNA from persons convicted of a Federal offense is limited to felonies and certain misdemeanors. Section 155 corrects this anomaly by including convictions in the Federal sample-collection regulatory authority, thus allowing the Federal Government to collect DNA from all persons convicted of a Federal crime. The 2006 Act also allows DNA to be collected from all arrestees, but in the case of persons detained under Federal authority this authority is limited to non-U.S. persons—i.e., foreign visitors who are neither U.S. citizens nor permanent residents. Problems might arise in the case of U.S. persons who are detained and facing Federal criminal charges, but who were not arrested by Federal authorities. Examples include persons who are being prosecuted federally but were arrested by the State officers participating in a joint Federal-State task force, and persons who turn themselves in to Federal authorities without being formally arrested. Arguably, the 2006 act's arrest authority should extend to such individuals—they are constructively arrested. Section 155 eliminates any ambiguity and possibility of litigation over these matters by expressly granting the Federal Government the authority to collect DNA samples from individuals facing Federal charges.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to recognize all of the staff who worked so hard to see this bill through to completion. Please allow me to

thank Ken Valentine and Tom Jipping of Senator HATCH's staff, Dave Turk of Senator BIDEN's staff, Julie Katzman and Noah Bookbinder of Senator LEAHY's staff, Nicole Gustafson of Senator GRASSLEY's staff, as well as Chad Groover, who has since left Senator GRASSLEY's office but who played a critical role in developing many of the penalty enhancements included in title II, Christine Leonard of Senator KENNEDY's staff, Lara Flint of Senator FEINGOLD's staff, Nate Jones of Senator KOHL's staff, Sharon Beth Kristal of Senator DEWINE's staff, Reed O'Connor of Senator CORNYN's staff, Jane Treat of Senator COBURN's staff, Greg Smith of Senator FEINSTEIN's staff, Marianne Upton of Senator DURBIN's staff, Bradley Hayes of Senator SESSIONS's staff, Bradley Schreiber of Mr. FOLEY's staff, and last but not least in this group, Brooke Bacak of my Republican Policy Committee staff.

I would especially like to thank Allen Hicks and Brandi White of Senator FRIST's staff, who were very helpful in securing the inclusion of the Child-Abuse Registry in this bill, Matt Miner of Senator SPECTER's staff, who played a critical role in negotiating the final bill, and Mike Volkov, Sean McLaughlin, and Phil Kiko of Mr. SENSENBRENNER's staff. The bill that we have today would not exist were it not for the professionalism, expertise, and dedication of the SENSENBRENNER staff. Often it is easy in Congress simply to pass any bill dealing with a subject so that we can say that we have addressed the problem. This is not such a bill. This is a strong, tough bill that will make a difference in the safety and security of our Nation's children. It is a bill of which we can all be proud, and Mr. SENSENBRENNER's staff deserves recognition for their contribution to that result.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, back in May 2005, with the leadership of Senator SPECTER, Senator BIDEN, Senator KENNEDY, and others, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved an important child safety bill, S. 1086. The committee worked tirelessly to craft a prudent, bipartisan bill that would assist States in their ongoing efforts to protect children through tighter monitoring of known sex offenders. It was a good bill, and it passed the full Senate in May of this year by unanimous consent.

Now, extensive bipartisan discussions with the House have produced a revised version of the bill, which the Senate is voting on today. The new bill is better in a few ways than the Senate-passed bill that we produced and also, regrettably, takes some steps backward. While this new bill is not the bill I would have written, I intend to support it and expect that it will pass.

As a former prosecutor, and as a father and grandfather, I know that there is no higher duty than to protect our society's children, to take every step possible to prevent them from coming to harm, and to punish those who attempt to or succeed in harming them. We have never debated whether children should be protected. Of course they should. The only debate is about how they should be protected, and how best to deploy and utilize limited resources to deter and punish those who would prey on them.

Over the last 30 years, I have worked closely with others to write and enact legislation aimed specifically at protecting children and assisting victims. In the last Congress, Senator HATCH and I joined to introduce the PROTECT Act, which provided prosecutors and law enforcement with tools necessary to combat child pornography and human trafficking. The final legislation passed by Congress included a number of provisions that I had either authored or supported, such as the National AMBER Alert Network Act; the Protecting Our Children First Act, which reauthorized funding for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children; and legislation to amend the Violence Against Women Act to provide transitional housing assistance grants for child victims of domestic violence.

In addition, I am pleased that the Senate has acted on other legislation for children and crime victims that I have sponsored. These include the 21st Century Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act, which among other things included important grant funds for the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and established the Violence Against Women Office in the Justice Department. In 2004, the President signed into law the Justice For All Act, a package of criminal justice reforms that, among other things, authorized funds to reduce rape kit backlogs and enumerated crime victims' rights.

I am glad that this new consensus legislation to protect children honors the efforts of John and Revé Walsh, who have worked so hard to ensure that other families would not experience the tragedy that befell their family. It has been my privilege to work for many years with the Walshes and with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, in which they have played such an instrumental role, to take many important steps to keep children and families safe. I commend and thank John Walsh once again for his passionate advocacy on behalf of the Nation's children over many, many years.

I am also glad that members of both parties in both bodies ultimately agreed with me and with the distinguished Senate Republican and Democratic leaders that we should prioritize finishing and passing legislation to protect children from sexual predators, without tying this crucial legislation to other more difficult issues. The Senate has passed court security legislation, for which I was a principal cosponsor, as part of S. 2766, and we have been working to settle differences between our legislation and the other body's court security proposals. Court security legislation should pass this year, but it would not have been right to endanger either the court security bills or this crucial child protection legislation by tying them together.

Gang legislation is on a separate track entirely. It is just getting started in the Senate. Passing legislation to protect children from sexual predators has been my first priority. Seeking simultaneously to resolve extensive differences over provisions in the gang bill and other crime legislation could have caused us to miss this chance. It is commendable that, in the end, both bodies chose to focus on passing sex offender legislation and not to jeopardize this by tying this bill to more controversial measures.

The gang bill is just now before the Judiciary Committee, which is the appropriate place to start work on a complex and important piece of criminal justice legislation. It is a new and very different version of this bill. It will be important to hold a hearing on this bill to listen to the Federal, State, and local law enforcement officers who are combating gang violence on a regular basis, and from the organizations that are working to keep kids out of gangs. Gang violence is a disturbing and difficult menace in our communities, and as we craft solutions to help address these issues we should strive to get it right. We have done the right thing by finalizing this important child protection legislation first, before turning to that and other difficult tasks.

When S. 1086 was first introduced in May 2005, serious concerns were raised by members of the Judiciary Committee, State attorneys general, the Department of Justice, and others. Through an impressive, bipartisan effort these concerns were largely addressed. I appreciate that Senators, and now House Members, of both parties took these concerns to heart and revised this bill in ways that will increase the protection of children from the most dangerous sex offenders, while not overwhelming the States with requirements that could hinder their own efforts. I believe that this new bill takes a few unfortunate steps back from the well thought out Senate version, but it still achieves many of the crucial goals we identified. The resulting bill ensures that each State will have an effective sex offender registry and that all States will share registry information—all of which will help keep our children safer.

I am glad that this bill addresses my concerns and that of many others of both parties in the Senate in giving significant discretion to the States in the handling of juvenile offenders. Juvenile justice has always been a province of the States, and State legislatures, prosecutors, and judges have developed significant expertise in distinguishing which juvenile offenders represent a continuing threat to society and which juveniles, with appropriate treatment and monitoring, can turn

themselves around and become contributing members of society.

This bill correctly allows the States, in many cases, to use their expertise—and they know more about these issues than we do here in Washington—to decide which juveniles should be on sex offender registries, to what extent, and for how long. It also appropriately requires the States to include the most egregious juvenile offenders, who do represent a threat to others, on their sex offender registries. I think the bill goes too far in a few cases in limiting States' discretion to determine which juveniles should be placed on registries and to allow those juvenile offenders who have lived cleanly and turned their lives around to get off of registries. But overall, this bill strikes an acceptable balance on this issue, and I am glad that those of us who were concerned about appropriate deference to the expertise of the States spoke out and were heard to some extent.

This bill takes a good if small first step toward what should be one of our most important priorities in keeping our children safe from sex offenders: treatment. While the most dangerous sex offenders may be predisposed to reoffend and should be treated accordingly, many studies have shown that people who commit less serious sex offenses often, with appropriate treatment, do not present a significant risk of recidivism and can become responsible members of society. One of the best ways to protect our children is to help as many low-risk offenders as possible turn their lives around, so that our scant law enforcement resources can be focused on those dangerous offenders who are a demonstrable threat to our children. In addition to the Bureau of Prisons Program included in S. 1086, the current bill includes a new program directed specifically to the treatment of juvenile sex offenders, who have been proven to be especially responsive to treatment. This is a welcome addition to the bill, and one we should build on in the future.

I want to direct the attention of my colleagues to title V of the bill, which makes substantial amendments to section 2257 of title 18. By way of background, Congress passed the original version of section 2257 in 1988, as a means to help ensure that minors were not being exploited by the adult, hard-core pornography industry in violation of the child exploitation laws. In 1989, the District Court for the District of Columbia found that this original version violated the first amendment. In 1990, Congress responded to the District Court decision by significantly narrowing the scope of section 2257.

The House bill proposed an expansion of section 2257 beyond what was held unconstitutional before the 1990 amendments, and beyond the pornography industry and those who exploit children. The proposed expansion of section 2257 gave rise to legitimate concerns, expressed by groups as far-ranging as the Chamber of Commerce, the Motion Picture Association of America, the American Hotel and Lodging Association, the American Library Association, and the American Conservative Union, that its record-keeping and labeling requirements, and associated criminal liability, might now affect an array of mainstream, legitimate, and first-amendment-protected activities and industries. These industries are leaders in protecting children employed in their industries and are far removed from the problem that the legislation purportedly sought to address. Subjecting them to the burdens of a recordkeeping and labeling statute intended for the pornography industry would create substantial burdens of compliance without any added benefit in the wholly legitimate and vital cause of actually safeguarding the security and welfare of children.

Because the focus of these requirements is adult pornography and the protection of children, not mainstream visual depictions and activities that do not threaten children, the new bill includes provisions intended to limit the reach of these requirements to those who are actually exploiting children. Most notably, section 2257A(h) enables law-abiding, legitimate businesses, which create and commercially distribute materials that are not, and do not appear to be, child pornography, to certify to the Attorney General that, pursuant to existing laws, labor agreements, or industry standards, they regularly and in the normal course of business collect the name, date of birth, and address of performers employed by them. This recognizes that such legitimate, law-abiding industries in fact routinely collect the information necessary to demonstrate their compliance with the child protection laws and that for this reason they were never intended to be the focus of this more extensive recordkeeping and labeling statute. Businesses that so certify and thus exhibit their good faith can avoid some of the more onerous requirements, and associated criminal liability, rightfully placed on others whose compliance is more likely to further the interest of protecting children.

By way of illustration, the motion picture industry currently operates under a panoply of laws, both civil and criminal, as well as regulations and labor agreements governing the employment of children in any production. They check work permits, require parents or guardians to be present at all times during production, and in some cases even obtain court approval for the employment of the children in films and television shows. It is fair to say that the film and television industries are a leader among industries in safeguarding the interests of children in the workplace. Yet in the absence of the certification provision in section 2257A(h), these studios would be subjected to the same extensive record-keeping and labeling requirements as a hard-core pornographer is under this bill, as would a host of other legitimate entities throughout the distribution chain for mainstream motion pictures and television shows.

The focus of the underlying statute should remain on helping apprehend child predators and not on legitimate businesses that have no role in harming children. Under section 2257A(h), motion picture companies that certify to the Department of Justice that they collect the name, date of birth, and address of all the performers employed by them, for purposes of compliance with existing laws, such as filling out an I–9 form or W–4s for tax purposes, or pursuant to labor agreements or their normal business practices, will not be subject to the more burdensome requirements of this statute. Establishing this regime will have the additional benefit of allowing the Department of Justice to focus their limited resources in areas where they should be focused—pursuing those who harm children. This provision has been in effect for 18 years and yet has not been used. It is my hope that the Department of Justice, having obtained the amendments they sought, will begin to enforce the law and focus on those who harm children, and not on those legitimate businesses that do not.

Other exemptions in the bill exclude from the recordkeeping requirements and annual certification regime providers of Internet access, telecommunications, and online search tools, as well as online hosting, storage, and transmission services, so long as the provider does not select or alter the content. It is ironic that the broadest exemptions are granted to the providers of various types of Internet and telecommunications services, even though the advent of the Internet is cited in the original version of this bill as greatly increasing the ease of transporting, distributing, receiving, and advertising child pornography in interstate commerce. Notwithstanding these exemptions, nothing in this bill can or should be construed to impair the enforcement of any other Federal criminal statute or to limit or expand any law pertaining to intellectual property against these entities.

Regrettably, the core, bipartisan bill to strengthen State sex offender registration programs was joined in both the House and the Senate to unrelated provisions aimed at creating additional mandatory minimum sentences. I agree with the U.S. Judicial Conference and the vast majority of Federal judges and practitioners that harsh, inflexible mandatory sentencing laws are a recipe for injustice. In its letter dated March 7, 2006, regarding the House bill, the Judicial Conference, headed by Chief Justice John Roberts, wrote that mandatory minimum sentences undermine the sentencing guideline regime Congress established under the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 by preventing the systemic development of guidelines that reduce unwarranted disparity and provide proportionality and fairness in punishment.

Mandatory sentences also tie prosecutors' hands in these cases where it is most important that they have the discretion to plea bargain, especially considering how difficult it can be to prepare children emotionally and psychologically to testify against their abusers.

When addressing this issue in committee last year, Senators from both sides of the aisle agreed to limit the imposition of new mandatory minimum sentences to the most serious and violent crimes against children, rather than to myriad lesser crimes as was originally proposed. The new bill backslides from this agreement to an unfortunate extent. If we are going to establish mandatory minimum sentences, we should at least proceed in a thoughtful and coherent way, with some understanding of the range of offense conduct that may be covered and the sorts of sentences that are being imposed under current law. Instead, we simply pluck ever-higher numbers out of thin air. Congress greatly increased the penalties for most sex offenses just 3 years ago, in the PROTECT Act. Nothing has changed since then to warrant this new round of arbitrary sentence inflation.

Another controversial measure included in the House-passed bill was a proposal to strip Federal courts of jurisdiction to review constitutional errors in sentencing that a State court has deemed harmless. The Senate Judiciary Committee reviewed this jurisdiction-stripping provision last year, during its consideration of the so-called Streamlined Procedures Act, S. 1088. That bill—and this provision in particular—was strongly opposed by a broad coalition of organizations, including the United States Judicial Conference. Following hearings, the committee specifically rejected this provision by adopting a substitute amendment that stripped it out in its entirety; the substitute then died in committee without further action. To include such an extraneous and deeply flawed provision in the current bill would have been wrong, and it is a credit to this bill that it has been removed.

Another area of concern is a provision that was also included in the Senate's comprehensive immigration bill. The provision prohibits the approval of a visa application for the relative of a U.S. citizen or legal resident based on the citizen or resident's conviction for any of the sex offenses enumerated in the bill. This provision casts a wide net, and in many cases will harshly and unnecessarily penalize people seeking entry to the United States who have a family member in the country, but where the citizen or resident poses no threat to the individual seeking entry.

The bill gives the Secretary of DHS discretion to assess these applications on a case-by-case basis and waive the denial, and I hope this will turn out to be more than just an empty gesture. Given that this bill greatly expands the crimes sufficient to deny an application, I urge the Secretary to give thoughtful consideration to each case in which a waiver is sought. In a case of a citizen who is on the path to rehabilitation or whose crime was relatively minor, denial of a family member's support would serve no rational purpose and would undermine the goals of family unity. I hope the Secretary will actively use this waiver authority to limit the broad reach of this provision to those cases where a citizen or legal resident genuinely poses a threat to a family member seeking entry.

This legislation requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to create a national registry of substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect which would, when fully implemented over time, serve the purpose of enabling child protective service agencies to identify an adult's past child maltreatment history in other States, without having to check every individual State child protective service central registry. Improving the ability of child protective service agencies to collect information on prior cases of child maltreatment by a named adult is a worthy objective. However, to rush into the creation of such a national registry, without deliberate consideration and evaluation first of the wide variation in how State child abuse and neglect data on substantiated cases identifies the perpetrator of the abuse or neglect and the specifics of their maltreatment—what the bill calls the nature of the substantiated case—would be reckless.

For that reason, the legislation also mandates the HHS Secretary to conduct a study on the feasibility of establishing data collection standards for a national child abuse and neglect registry. Clearly, such a study should be completed before the Federal Government begins to implement the creation of such a registry and to collect registry information from the States. We need to know what we are working with before we create a system which might give the public a false sense of security or violate the due process rights of children and families alike. Caution is advised in moving forward on this matter in order to develop an information system which is both fair and reliable.

The legislation also requires the HHS Secretary to establish standards for how, and to whom, this national registry information will be disseminated. In view of the sensitivity of this registry, which is to include information historically maintained only at the state or local child protective service agency level, I urge the Secretary, in consideration of these standards and before collecting any national registry data, to be cognizant of past congressional concerns related to the protection of legal rights of families, as reflected in 42 U.S.C. 5106(b)(2)(A)(xix), and for a fair appellate process for individuals who disagree with a substantiated finding of abuse or neglect, as reflected in 42 U.S.C. 5106(b)(2)(A)(xv)(2). Both of these are provisions of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

Significantly, the legislation does not provide any new financial or technical assistance to States to improve or standardize their child protective services substantiated case record-keeping systems, or to support States in the added burden of preparing for, and transferring data to, a new national registry. Not all States maintain the same registry information. Some States do not record registry entries by name of perpetrator but rather by name of child; some States no longer maintain registries at all. Most tribes, which are included in the legislation, maintain no registries at all. Without this important additional technical and financial assistance to the States, the quality of the information collected would likely be uneven and at times unreliable. This is a serious deficiency in the legislative mandate for the creation of a national registry of child abuse and neglect cases, one that I hope will be corrected through a targeted appropriation that focuses on helping State child protective service agencies upgrade their central registries or comparable systems of case-specific data.

I am pleased that the bill includes my proposal to authorize grants to Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America and the National Crime Prevention Council. Big Brothers and Big Sisters provides valuable mentoring services to young people across the country, and supporting their mission is a valuable investment that will reap measurable rewards. The National Crime Prevention Council helps communities across the country understand and address the causes of crime. Grants to this organization help communities become active in crime prevention at the grassroots level, and encouraging their continued efforts is something we should all strongly support.

I am also pleased that the sponsors of this bill agreed to incorporate S. 2155, popularly known as Masha's Law. This legislation, named after a Russian orphan who was sexually exploited by her adoptive father, will increase the civil statutory damages available to victims of child exploitation. It will also ensure that victims of child pornography whose images remain in circulation after they have turned 18 can still recover when those images are downloaded.

I am also pleased that the bill includes authorization of $12 million for grants to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, known as RAINN, for operation of its National Sexual Assault Hotline and for the other important work RAINN does to assist victims of sexual assault and to help prevent and prosecute sexual assault. I want to congratulate RAINN for recently logging the one-millionth call to its 24–hour telephone hotline.

RAINN, in helping a million crime victims, has not only made their lives better, but has also contributed greatly to the decrease in sexual violence in this country. I am honored that RAINN's founder and president, Scott Berkowitz, thanked me in connection with this important milestone for having supported the establishment of the National Sexual Assault Hotline.

Finally, I want to thank the Vermont Attorney General's Office and other concerned Vermont officials for prompt and constructive comments on multiple drafts of this legislation. Vermonters have worked hard to produce and improve our State's sex offender registry program in ongoing efforts to make it useful to law enforcement agencies and the general public in providing information regarding individuals who have proved a demonstrable threat to the public. In light of the mobility inherent in American society, cooperation and coordination among the various States improves the effectiveness of each State's registry, and the Federal assistance this bill provides will enhance that cooperation and coordination.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I will seek recognition in a moment, but for the time being, 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. SPECTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I support the pending legislation to pass the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006. This legislation is named for Adam Walsh, a child who was abducted and murdered. Adam's father, John Walsh, has diligently pursued efforts to save other children from the fate which befell Adam by working to enact Federal legislation which will establish a national registry for sex offenders.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that there are at least 100,000 sex offenders who are not accounted for by law enforcement. John Walsh estimates the figure to be higher, approximating 150,000.

Statistics show that sex offenders prey most often on juveniles; that two-thirds of the sex offenders currently in State prisons are there because they have victimized a child. Compared with other criminals, sex offenders are four times more likely to be rearrested for a sex crime. It is estimated that some 500,000 children are sexually abused each year. According to Department of Justice statistics, child molesters have been known to re-offend as late as 20 years after their release from prisons.

There are currently State laws which require registration of sex offenders, but unfortunately they have proved to be relatively ineffective, which requires the Federal Government to act on the national level.

I first met John Walsh after the disappearance of his son, Adam, some 25 years ago, when I was chairman of the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice, a subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee. At that time, in conjunction with Senator Paula Hawkins of Florida, we took the lead in establishing the Missing Children's Act of 1982, which has been very successful in locating children, where, in a variety of ways—on billboards, on milk cartons, on posters—missing children were identified and publicized. Many missing children were recovered.

In the intervening 25 years, John Walsh has undertaken a national crusade. He has been instrumental in advocating and persuading both the House and the Senate to move ahead with this legislation. He has had very strong support from the leadership of Senator HATCH, the former chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Senator HATCH has promoted this legislation, has initiated meetings, organized a meeting with John Walsh in the last several days in the Office of the majority leader where we organized plans to get this bill enacted so that it will be ready for signing by the President on July 27th, which is the anniversary of the abduction of Adam Walsh.

It has been a prodigious job to get this bill cleared on both sides, not having anything added on to it, and many efforts were made so that it would be enacted in time to mark the anniversary of the abduction of Adam Walsh. For that timetable, Senator HATCH deserves a great deal of credit.

As is well known, Senator HATCH chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee for many years. His leadership is still a very key factor, especially on this legislation.

I compliment my colleague, Senator RICK SANTORUM, as well as Senator KYL, Senator DEWINE, Senator TALENT, and others, for their support in producing this bill, which will protect children with the assistance of some 200 new Federal prosecutors, 45 new computer forensic experts to prevent child pornography, 20 new Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces, and the Department of Justice's Project Safe Childhood Program and new SMART Office, which are both dedicated to protecting children from sex offenders.

A special note of commendation is due to Senator SANTORUM for his work on two important components of the bill: First, on Project Safe Childhood and second, on the Safe Schools Act. These provisions and others will help stop sex offenders such as Brian McCutchen, who was sentenced last year to 35 to 70 years in a Pennsylvania prison for attempting to murder and rape an 8-year-old Philadelphia girl in a public restroom. He was a repeat offender. He had been convicted of assaulting a 9-year-old girl in a similar public restroom attack in Manayunk, PA, in 2001. Had the provisions of the law been in place 2 years ago, the second crime might not have happened because the community would have been on notice of McCutchen's first attack on a little girl.

I know from my work as district attorney of Philadelphia the impact of sex crimes on children. To be a victim of a crime is a horrible experience for anyone, but to be a child and the victim of a sex crime leaves an indelible imprint—hard to shake, hard to forget, traumatic, and of gigantic importance in the balance of that child's life.

We are taking a very important step forward. I thank and commend John Walsh for his leadership and again thank and commend Senator HATCH for his leadership in the Senate on this important issue. I thank Chairman SENSENBRENNER, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, for his cooperation and coordination, and also to the staffs.

I will single out especially Michael O'Neill, who is chief counsel and staff director for the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, as far as I know, other than the few remarks I will make right now, I think Senator FRIST is the only speaker remaining on our sex offender bill.

I would feel bad if I did not mention a number of the staff people who have helped us on this bill. My own staffer, Ken Valentine, who is a Secret Service agent, has been serving as a detailee in my office and has really carried the mail on this like few members of the Senate staff I have ever known.

Tom Jipping, on my staff; Dave Turk, on Senator BIDEN's staff, had a great deal to do with this, as well. Bradley Schreiber, with Mr. FOLEY's staff; Mike O'Neill, of Senator SPECTER's staff; Mike Miners, Senator SPECTER's chief counsel, crime counsel; Todd Braunstein, with Senator SPECTER; Matt McPhillips, with Senator SPECTER; Julie Katzman, with Senator LEAHY; Bruce Cohen, Senator LEAHY's chief of staff on the Judiciary Committee; Noah Bookbinder, with Senator LEAHY; Christine Leonard, with Senator KENNEDY. Senator KENNEDY has played a significant role here. He was willing to withdraw the hate crimes bill so that this bill would pass readily through both bodies. I am very grateful to him.

Reed O'Connor of Senator CORNYN's staff; Nicole Gustafson of Senator GRASSLEY's staff; Sharon Beth Kristal, Senator DEWINE's staff; Gabriel Adler, of Senator DORGAN's staff; Joe Matal, from Senator KYL's staff; Avery Mann, from America's Most Wanted, who played a significant role here; Bradley Hayes, from Senator SESSIONS' staff; Lara Flint, from Senator FEINGOLD's staff; Cindy Hayden, from Senator SESSIONS' staff; Allen Hicks, of course, from Senator FRIST's staff; and Brandi White, from Senator FRIST's staff.

Of course, I would like to mention Michelle Laxalt, who took a great personal interest in this bill and from the outside helped us a great deal. We want to thank the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, especially Ernie Allen, John Libonati, Robbie Callaway, and Carolyn Atwell-Davis, who has carried so many balls for us here, and Manus Cooney, who used to be chief of staff under me on the Judiciary Committee.

And then I would like to pay respect to just some of the victims who really helped with this bill: Elizabeth and Ed and Lois Smart; Linda Walker, the mother of Dru Sjodin; Mark Lunsford; Erin Runnion; Marc Klass; Polly Franks, Patty Wetterling; and last but not least—really, really, we can never thank them enough, John and Reve Walsh.

So with that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senate is about to take an important step to improve the safety of our Nation's children. Very shortly, we will pass the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, also known as the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this significant legislation.

The Senate passed an earlier version of this bill by unanimous consent on May 4, nearly 2 months ago. Since then, Senators SPECTER and LEAHY have conducted bipartisan negotiations with the House, which had passed a different version.

Today, I am pleased to say that negotiations have resulted in a strong bill that will soon pass both Chambers and become law. I appreciate the willingness of all Members to put aside unrelated controversial issues so that we could focus on the core purpose of this bill—protecting children.

Next Thursday, the 27th of July, is the 25th anniversary of the abduction and murder of 6-year-old Adam Walsh. Since then, the work of Adam's father, John Walsh, demonstrates that a single person can make a difference in our country and our world.

Following the tragic event involving their son, John and Reve Walsh founded the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. John Walsh's TV program, ''America's Most Wanted,'' has led to the apprehension of thousands of criminals. And now John Walsh has been the driving force behind this bill.

The legislation establishes a national sex offender registry which will make it easier for local law enforcement to track sex offenders and prevent repeat offenses. The bill also authorizes much needed grants to help local law enforcement agencies establish and integrate sex offender registry systems.

My home State of Nevada has been a leader in this movement. Our State recently made changes to improve the accuracy and reliability of the Nevada registry requirements. This Federal bill will strengthen those efforts.

Donna Coleman, past president of the Children's Advocacy Alliance based in Henderson, NV, was instrumental in getting our State laws changed. She is another example of how one person can make a difference, and I applaud her work.

Not all States have been as vigilant as Nevada, and that is a problem when sex offenders cross State lines. The bill before us will establish uniform rules for the information sex offenders are required to report and when they are required to report it. It will also give law enforcement agencies the tools they need to enforce these requirements.

A number of Senators have been leaders in this legislative effort. In addition to Chairman SPECTER and Ranking Member LEAHY, I appreciate the hard work of Senators BIDEN, DORGAN, HATCH, KENNEDY, and others. I thank the majority leader for making this bill a priority. I hope the House will follow suit and send this bill to the President for his signature without delay.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLEN). The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, 25 years ago this month, Reve Walsh took her 6-year-old son Adam shopping with her. They were looking for lamps at a local department store—a short mile from their home—when Adam was abducted. Sixteen days later, Adam's body was positively identified. To date, no one has been indicted for this horrific crime.

As parents, John and Reve Walsh's worst nightmare had become a reality. As a father of three sons, I cannot imagine what pain this caused the Walsh family.

Through their tears and grief, John and Reve Walsh transformed the tragedy of Adam's death into a lifelong commitment—a commitment to protect children from abduction, abuse, and exploitation.

John and Reve have been on the forefront of most major child protection legislation passed by this Congress over the last 25 years: the Missing Children's Act of 1982; the Missing Children's Assistance Act of 1984, which founded the fantastic National Center for Missing and Exploited Children; the Protect Act of 2003, which established a nationwide Amber Alert network to coordinate rapid emergency responses to missing child alerts—and, most recently, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, which is before us today.

This important legislation establishes a national sex offender registry, publicly available and searchable by ZIP Code; creates a national abuse registry; toughens penalties for crimes against children; and cracks down on the growing crisis of Internet predators and child pornography.

John's and Reve's tireless dedication is an inspiration to parents of child victims and millions of American families. I am proud to have worked with John and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children on this legislation. I am confident that the legislation will save the lives of thousands of children.

I thank John Walsh, Ernie Allen, president of the National Center, and Carolyn Atwell-Davis, along with the rest of the dedicated staff at the National Center, for the truly amazing work they do, on a daily basis, to protect our Nation's children.

In March, John came by my office to talk about the importance of a national sex offender registry. He told me that this was the most important piece of legislation he had seen in over two decades of advocating for children's issues.

I promised John then that I would make passing this critical piece of legislation a priority. And I am proud to tell John—to tell our Nation's children, parents, and law enforcement—that the U.S. Senate has not only heard your concerns, but we are acting tonight to address them.

The Adam Walsh bill—so named to honor the upcoming 25th anniversary of his death and the memory of other child victims and their families—has many components designed to protect our Nation's children.

First, the bill establishes a national sex offender registry. Currently, there are more than 550,000 registered sex offenders in the United States, and at least 100,000 of them are missing.

Loopholes in the current system allow some sexual predators to evade law enforcement, placing our children at risk. While many States, including my own home State of Tennessee, have registries, this information is not always shared with other States. By creating a national registry, we are closing the loopholes that allow offenders to slip through the cracks. And we are encouraging law enforcement at all levels—local, State, and Federal—to collaborate and to share information.

The registry will make it easier for law enforcement to act on a tip, to identify and intercept offenders before they can strike again, before they can repeat their crimes and victimize more children.

The national registry will be publicly accessible via the Internet and searchable by ZIP Code. This empowers parents. It gives them the tools they need to learn whether a neighbor down the street has a history of sexual violence so they can protect their children from harm.

Further, the bill increases the penalty for failure to register from a misdemeanor to a felony. It enhances registration requirements, by mandating that offenders register more often and in person, rather than by mail.

By strengthening these requirements, we are sending a message loudly and clearly to sex offenders: If you don't register, we will find you, and you will go to jail.

The bill also toughens penalties for violent crimes against children, including sex trafficking of children, coercion

or enticement of child prostitution, and sexual abuse.

Another aspect of this bill is the creation of a child abuse registry. I want to thank Senators KYL and ENZI for their hard work in helping to get this provision included in the bill.

This legislation was recommended by Childhelp, a children's advocacy organization with whom my wife Karyn and many of our Senate spouses are proud to be associated.

Every day, four children die as a result of child abuse, and every day Childhelp is on the frontlines working to prevent child abuse and treat victims of such abuse. They explained to me that while many States have child abuse registries, this information is not shared with other States.

This is especially problematic with child abusers. They often relocate when questions are raised by a teacher, a neighbor, or a doctor about whether a child is being abused.

By creating a national child abuse registry, we will tear down the information barrier and enable Child Protective Services professionals in different States to share information critical to child abuse investigations.

The final component of this bill addresses the sexual exploitation of children over the Internet—and the growing crisis of child pornography, an estimated $20 billion a year industry.

The Internet has become the anonymous gateway for child predators to make contact with children, to win their confidence, and to victimize them.

Current data show that of the 24 million child Internet users, 1 in 5 has received unwanted sexual solicitations online—1 in 5. And as a recent ''Dateline NBC'' series called ''To Catch A Predator'' vividly demonstrated, many of these cyber-stalkers are more than eager to trap their young online victims in a real-world nightmare.

The bill provides additional resources to combat this growing problem by adding 200 new Federal prosecutors to prosecute crimes involving the sexual exploitation of minors; by creating 10 new Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces, which bring local, State, and Federal law enforcement together to collaborate in solving these crimes; by adding 45 new forensics examiners to accelerate processing of online evidence of child exploitation; and by providing grants for programs to educate children and parents on Internet safety.

We must continue to do more to protect our children. American families should not have to live in fear of child predators lurking in the shadows of our neighborhoods or enticing our children online.

I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their efforts, for giving life to this critical piece of legislation. This is clearly a bipartisan, bicameral bill that has overwhelming support. I am pleased we were able to unite, Democrats and Republicans, in this body and, indeed, House with Senate.

In the Senate, I especially want to recognize my colleague, Senator HATCH, for his tireless efforts on this bill—the champion, the leader, the one with the bold vision, without whom simply this would not have happened.

I want to thank Chairman SPECTER and Senators SANTORUM, KYL, and DEWINE, for all their hard work on bringing this legislation to fruition.

Also, I want to thank Speaker HASTERT and Majority Leader BOEHNER and Chairman SENSENBRENNER and Congressman FOLEY for their commitment to this issue.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for this Adam Walsh bill, and look forward to a future that is safer for our children.

Mr. President, I do not believe there are any further speakers on the bill; therefore, I yield back all time and ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to third reading and a vote on H.R. 4472, with all of the provisions of the agreement remaining in place. I ask unanimous consent, after passage, that the title amendment be read and agreed to.

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

The question is on the engrossment of the amendment and third reading of the bill

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 4472), as amended, was passed.

Mr. HATCH. I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. FRIST. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read the amendment to the title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Amend the title to read as follows: ''To protect children from sexual exploitation and violent crime, to prevent child abuse and child pornography, to promote Internet safety, and to honor the memory of Adam Walsh and other child crime victims.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the amendment to the title is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 4687) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 5 minutes.

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

CHILD CUSTODY PROTECTION ACT

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I rise to speak today about the Child Custody Protection Act. A bill the Senate will debate shortly. I believe, as a father of three children, including one daughter, it is a very important piece of legislation.

Good people can disagree on issues even of profound moral consequence. Most Americans, even those who consider themselves pro-choice, believe there should be at least some restrictions on abortion.

I believe this is one of those situations where we should be able to come together and find some common ground. The Child Custody Protection Act simply states that if an adult willfully takes a minor child across State lines to get an abortion, for the purpose of avoiding a State's parental consent or notification law that would be a Federal crime for that adult.

Judicial bypass is an integral part of all effective parental consent laws. So for those concerned about the cases of parental rape or incest and what a child does in that case?—there is a judicial review, a judicial bypass available. The Child Custody Protection Act would only apply in those States parental consent or notification laws in place.

This is an important piece of legislation, especially for parents as many of these cases involve a 20-something-year-old male who has impregnated a young teenager, often a 13, 14, 15-year-old girl, which has ended in a secret abortion.

Now because your little girl had become pregnant and this 20-something-year-old realized that is a crime of statutory rape, they want to dispose of the evidence. So they decide to talk your little girl into going across State lines for an abortion because your State law requires parental notification or parental consent for such a procedure. They go to the State next door, take care of the abortion, and you, the parent, know nothing about it. How would you feel as a parent in a situation such as that?

Even further, abortion is a surgical procedure. Our kids are not even allowed to get an aspirin in school without parental consent. They are not allowed to take a field trip without parental consent. They are not allowed to take sex education classes without parental consent. Yet, remarkably, it is not against the law evade parental consent or notice requirements to take a child across State lines to get a surgical procedure, a surgical abortion.

It is time for legislation such as the Child Custody Protection Act. I realize that emotions run high on both sides of the abortion issue. They run deeply and have divided our country for some time. We need to look for a place of common ground. A place where reasonable people should be able to come together and agree to at least have this one restriction on abortion, agree that parents should be involved in the decisions, especially the medical decisions, involving their children. The Child Custody Protection Act does just that.