

however, Congress has prevented the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) from even considering whether we can do better, particularly in relation to the fuel efficiency standards of light trucks, which haven't been significantly increased in ten years.

Many constituents and colleagues are often surprised to learn of my advocacy for CAFE standards. My motivation is simple, and is based on the success of the original CAFE statute. I feel that NHTSA should at least be allowed to study whether an additional increasing CAFE standards is an appropriate action. As you may know, light truck standards have not had a significant increase in the last ten years. Light trucks are regulated separately from cars and are only required to get 20.7 mpg on fleet average as opposed to 27.5 for cars. In 1983, the average fuel economy of light trucks was already 20.7 mpg. Since 1983 it has dropped .3 mpg to 20.4. This is hardly a technological breakthrough.

I am not swayed by doomsday predictions from automakers who claim they will be forced to manufacture fleets of subcompact cars. These are the same arguments that were used during the original debate in 1974. One only needs to examine the possible options available to consumers today to disprove this theory. When consumers can purchase SUVs as large as the Chevy Suburban or Ford Excursion, it is hard to argue that consumer choice has been compromised. I have complete faith in American automobile manufacturers that they can continue to produce fuel efficient vehicles that are the envy of the world.

Therefore, it was with great interest that I listened to Energy Secretary Bill Richardson testify before the Interior Subcommittee this morning on the Clinton Administration's multi-faceted plan to address high gasoline prices. This testimony focused on a lengthy discussion of the results of last month's diplomatic efforts. When pressed on the Administration's plan to decrease this country's dependence on foreign oil sources, Secretary Richardson went on to tout his proposals to improve alternative fuel options and fuel efficiency. He suggested tax incentives and credits for U.S. oil producers, fuel efficient vehicle production, and alternative fuel development. Unfortunately, there was no mention of CAFE standards.

In response to this omission, I had to ask why this Administration has failed to actively support new fuel efficiency standards. When I pressed Secretary Richardson to commit to making CAFE standards a centerpiece of the Clinton-Gore Administration's effort to address the current fuel shortage and long-term foreign oil dependency of this country, he ducked the question and told me he wished the EPA Administrator was available to answer.

I am perplexed by this response. Obviously, U.S. auto manufacturers have

demonstrated they are more than up to the challenge of producing more fuel efficient light trucks and SUVs. In fact, Ford Motor Company just announced plans to start selling within three years a hybrid gas-and-electric-powered SUV that gets about 40 miles per gallon.

Therefore, I fail to understand why the Clinton-Gore Administration can't make simply studying a possible increase in CAFE standards a top priority in this debate. I challenge the White House to embrace this common sense approach, which is certainly preferable to the groveling diplomacy it engaged in just weeks ago.

ADOPTION OPPORTUNITIES ACT

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the Adoption Opportunities Act which would amend the current adoption tax credit so it does what it was originally intended to do, and that is to help all kinds of families in their efforts to adopt all kinds of wonderful children.

I would like to begin my remarks this morning by introducing you and my colleagues to someone very special. This beautiful little girl's name is Serina Anglin. Serina was born, as you can see here, prematurely and severely addicted to drugs. Her mother was a 15-year-old girl who herself had been abandoned in a crack house by her drug-addicted mother.

At birth, doctors were all but certain Serena would not survive. When she was just a few months old, a neurologist described her in the following way:

In summary, Serina is a severely manifold handicapped child whose significant defects are in social, adaptive, affective, and cognitive development.

Serina has cerebral palsy as well as other multiple problems including crack cocaine prenatal addiction, history of herpes and encephalitis, and seizure disorders including epilepsy. . . . Her ability to walk is very uncertain. I think she will fall into the moderate to severe range of retardation.

However, through the grace of God, Serina came into the home of a wonderful couple, Hal and Patty Anglin, of Wisconsin, who are now her adoptive parents. I want to show you a current picture of Serina. Through their love and determination, Serina has not only survived but her progress has simply amazed medical experts.

Today, Serina is a remarkable child. She still has some small seizures, but her larger seizures are all but gone. She not only can walk, she recently learned to ride a bike. Each day she is becoming more and more active. She is true and living proof that the love of a family, growing up in a nurturing environment, can make what was deemed impossible possible.

This is not to say this miracle came easily. In the beginning, Serina's care required that she go to the doctor over 16 times a month. For the first year of her life, her adoptive mother, Patty, carried her in a tummy sack to simulate the safety and warmth she had

been deprived in the womb. She had to be taught how to breathe and swallow. She has had several surgeries on her leg which was damaged as a result of prenatal drug exposure.

I tell this story today because I cannot think of a better way to show my colleagues why the current tax credit needs to be changed. Serina was born to a mother who was a ward of the State. So upon her birth, she was immediately placed in foster care, as I explained. As such, when the Anglins, who were her foster care parents, went through the formal adoption process, the process of adoption cost them almost nothing.

Therefore, under our current definition of qualified adoption expenses, they were not eligible to receive one single dime of the \$5,000 tax credit that is supposedly available under current law. Had Serina, this beautiful little girl, been a healthy infant voluntarily given up and adopted privately or through one of our many able agencies, the Anglins would have been eligible to claim the \$5,000 tax credit. I am sure my colleagues will agree this was not our intention when we passed the adoption tax credit.

In the case of children in foster care with special needs, what gives many parents pause is that everyday care of these children can be both physically and financially draining. I cannot tell you how many foster parents tell me the only thing standing in the way of their formally adopting foster care children is the worry that their personal resources will be inadequate to properly care for them. Through a properly drafted and funded adoption tax credit, we can be the partners with these prospective parents whose hearts are ready to take on this responsibility.

It is a small step in the right direction but a very important step. A tax credit for special needs children logically should assist parents, such as the Anglins, with the everyday long-term costs of raising a child with special needs and should not be limited to the expenses of the "act of adoption" itself. The current definition is limited to "qualified adoption expenses." That is too narrow to reach children such as Serina who need our help the most.

The Adoption Opportunities Act, which we introduce today, proposes to fix this dilemma. It allows a straightforward \$10,000 tax credit for families who adopt a child with special needs. The new tax credit for special needs children will not require the parents to submit verification of their expenses, nor will the amount be dependent upon the cost of adoption itself.

I know many of us have argued for years about simplifying the Tax Code. I am hard pressed to imagine a way that would be more simple than the one Senator CRAIG and I are proposing, for all a parent has to do is simply attach a certificate of adoption for any special needs child to their tax return and they will get, under this bill, a \$10,000

credit that can be carried forward for 5 years. It is that simple.

Another problem lies in the fact that the current tax credit for nonspecial needs children is due to sunset in December of 2001. Hoping to ensure the credit was well designed and necessary, the drafters of the original bill agreed to reevaluate it after 5 years. We have done that and have included that in our bill. It permanently extends the \$5,000 tax credit for adoption and almost doubles the adoption tax credit for special needs.

Because of this assistance, many families, who might not otherwise have been financially able to do so, have been able to build a family through adoption. Last week, in fact, I had the great honor of attending a ceremony when 17 children from 14 different countries became citizens of the United States. All of these children were brought here to be adopted into loving and wonderful homes of Americans from all parts of our country.

At that gathering, one of the mothers who had adopted two children came up to me and said: Senator, please let them know in Congress how much we appreciate the adoption tax credit. It made all the difference to me and my husband as we decided to adopt our second child.

So we know that tax credit works. We know it has a positive impact, and part of our bill today extends that permanently so families can count on it.

With the cost of adoption still on the rise, this tax credit is an important factor, as I have mentioned. It has been estimated that adoptions can range anywhere from \$10,000 to \$20,000, whether done privately or through an agency domestically or internationally.

Another figure to keep in mind is one that was released recently by a national adoptive parent organization. They estimate that using specialized foster or adoptive parents instead of what we do now, which is congregate care facilities for drug-exposed children, could save—and I believe the Senator from Texas, Mr. GRAMM, will be interested in this as he continues to fight for ways the Federal Government can save our money—they estimate we can save as much as \$550 million a year by relying on adoptive parents instead of keeping many of these children in the “system,” for which the taxpayers pay. Anything we can do to encourage adoption will not only be the right thing, the moral thing, the wonderful thing, and the family values thing to do, but it is smart for the taxpayers of the United States.

In addition, in case people are interested, there are more than 100,000 children in this country today waiting to be adopted—children who have had termination with their biological parents. They are waiting for someone to claim them as their own and to be adopted. There are 550,000 children in foster care. About 450,000 of those are in the process of either being returned to their families or they, too, can be eligi-

ble for adoption. Clearly, there is a need to promote adoption in this country that works for the benefit of birth parents, adoptive parents, and the children.

Finally, for parents to raise a child in their home, the estimates for a middle-class family are about \$140,000. That is not including college tuition or vocational education. That is just an estimate. The least we can do is help in a small way with a \$5,000 or \$10,000 tax credit to encourage families to be their partner in this adoption effort.

I believe not only does it simplify the Tax Code, but there is a great need, and the need has been demonstrated. The results have been terrific. We have had testimony after testimony about how important the current system has been, so anything we can do to improve it I am sure will be welcomed by so many. It is a step in the right direction.

I close by saying, as we debate which tax credits to pursue, which are worthy, this adoption tax credit should be on the top of every list. We need to continue to be bold enough to take these steps because every time we do, children such as Serina, for whom people have given up hope, have found families on which to rely and with whom to grow.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. GRAMM. I commend our colleague from Louisiana. Today we have 130 million people who work outside the home and earn income. We have some 260 million Americans. About 30 million of them get some form of public assistance. You might ask yourself: Who takes care of the other 100 million Americans? They are taken care of by families. And the driving force is love.

So not only is the distinguished Senator from Louisiana talking about saving money, but what adoptive parents will add to the equation is love and care. The whole world benefits from it. So I commend her.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. I, too, thank the Senator from Louisiana for her leadership on this issue. We are fortunate enough to work together on this marvelous issue of adoption, chairing the adoption coalition here on the Senate side.

Both Senator LANDRIEU and I this week have helped host two delightful young ladies who are on the hill, Miss USA and Miss Teen USA, both adopted, both coming from adoptive families. They were in my office this morning speaking about the wonderful families they were allowed to be a part of who have granted them all of this charm and talent that can only come from a loving environment, that has allowed them to become national leaders, as they now are, as Miss USA and Miss Teen USA.

I say thank you to the Senator for her leadership on this issue. It is critically important to America and America's families.

PROJECT EXILE: THE SAFE STREETS AND NEIGHBORHOODS ACT OF 2000

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, today, I rise in support of S. 2390, “Project Exile: The Safe Streets and Neighborhoods Act of 2000”, which establishes a grant program to provide incentives for states to enact mandatory minimum sentences for certain firearms offenses. I commend Senator DEWINE for his leadership and appreciate the opportunity to join with him and other colleagues working together on this important legislation. The time has come to restore our commitment to aggressively prosecuting gun crimes around this country. In states and cities around the country where aggressive prosecution of gun crimes is coupled with tough prison sentences, violent crime has gone down. Tough law enforcement saves lives.

This legislation provides \$100 million of additional resources over five years as incentives for efforts like Project Exile. To qualify for the grant program, states must have a mandatory minimum of 5 years without parole for convictions of violent crimes and serious drug trafficking offenses where a firearm is used during or in relation to the crime. In the alternative, the state can have a federal prosecution agreement which would refer those arrested for federal prosecution of the alleged gun crime in a collaborative effort between law enforcement.

Project Exile started in Richmond, Virginia as an attempt to reduce violent crime by aggressive enforcement of gun laws and improved law enforcement coordination. Since the program began in 1997, violent crimes involving handguns have decreased 65 percent and overall crime has been reduced by 35 percent. 385 guns were taken off of the street. In 1999, Project Exile was adopted statewide in Virginia. It has given prosecutors the ability to choose within which courts they will try offenders and created tougher penalties for people committing crimes with guns.

I have also worked to help expand this approach to Philadelphia in 1999, where “Operation Cease Fire” also adopts a zero tolerance policy for federal gun crimes. Project Exile has already proven that present laws can work if enforced properly. Federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutors work side by side to expedite prosecution of every federal firearms violation. In 1999, over 200 federal gun-related indictments were issued in Philadelphia and the surrounding counties. This is a 70 percent increase in indictments in only one year.

The bill authorizes \$10 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2001, \$15 million in FY02, \$20 million in FY03, \$25 million in FY04, and \$30 million in FY05. States must provide at least a 10 percent match and must also at least maintain current funding levels to qualify. Funds can be used for public awareness campaigns, law enforcement agencies,