

contributions made by foster parents. On April 26, Governor Rod Blagojevich proclaimed May 2004 "Foster Parent Appreciation Month." The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is the Nation's largest child welfare agency accredited by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services.

Illinois DCFS is working to reduce the number of children who require foster care. Through a program called Front End Redesign, early intervention services are provided to families after their needs become apparent to prevent the need for a child to be placed in foster care. For four consecutive years, Illinois has been a national leader in adoptions. With an increasing emphasis on early intervention and adoption, the number of Illinois children in foster care has declined from 51,331 children in 1997 to 19,297 children in 2004.

We still have a great demand—not only in Illinois but in States across the Nation—for additional caring adults to open their homes to foster children. Teenagers, adolescent moms and their babies, children with special needs, and sibling groups are some of the children most in need of foster and adoptive parents.

All children can reach their greatest potential when they live in safe, stable, and nurturing families. Yet far too many children lack this fundamental foundation. Foster parents, as well as the professionals and volunteers working within state child welfare programs, deserve our gratitude and respect for the sacrifices they make every day to ensure that our children—our Nation's future—receive the support they need as they mature into adulthood.●

RECOGNITION OF DR. CHARLES IRVIN HUDSON

● Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, like so many of the people who were fortunate enough to know him, I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of a dear friend and true leader, Dr. Charles Irvin Hudson. Dr. Hudson, known to many affectionately as "Doc," died unexpectedly May 7, 2004, at Our Lady of the Lake Hospital in Baton Rouge, LA, at the age of 72.

Doc Hudson was an educator and community leader in St. Landry Parish for nearly 50 years. He demonstrated his commitment to education by serving as a high school mathematics teacher for 10 years and later as the principal of two elementary schools, for which he received numerous awards and honors.

But Doc Hudson was equally committed to public service, and served his community as an elected official for nearly 30 years. First elected to the Opelousas City Council in 1974, he was to serve for three consecutive 4-year terms before becoming deputy secretary for the Louisiana State Department of Transportation and Development from 1984-88. Doc Hudson was

then elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives in 1991 where he served till his passing.

Throughout his remarkable career, Doc worked tirelessly for the people of St. Landry Parish and the State of Louisiana. He fought for both decency and accountability in our schools, worked to improve the quality of life for everyone in District 40, and developed warm, quality relationships with all who met him.

It was my privilege to have worked very closely with Doc on a number of occasions and to benefit from the wisdom of his counsel and the breadth of his understanding. I am honored to have known and learned from a man of such high moral character.

Representative Hudson will be remembered for his nearly 30 years of service in public life and 20 years as an educator, and for the great value he placed on developing relationships with people. He rooted his work in his personal experiences with the people affected by the issues. His dedication to people will stand as a legacy from which future generations will learn.

On behalf of the entire State of Louisiana, I pay tribute to this courageous statesman and convey my most respectful condolences to his family and to all who knew him.●

H-2B VISA CRISIS

● Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, today I would like to discuss my disappointment with the failure to address an issue of critical importance to small businesses around the country—the need to consider legislation temporarily raising the cap on the number of H-2B visas for this fiscal year.

As many of my colleagues know after hearing from their constituents, the limit on the number of H-2B visas that could be issued this fiscal year was reached in early March. The H-2B cap was reached less than halfway through the current fiscal year and has caused critical problems around the country. This is especially true for those small businesses that rely on H-2B visas to completely fill their staffing needs over the summer months. A business may apply for a H-2B visa no sooner than 120 days before the individual is needed for employment, and the cap was reached as businesses were applying for their summer positions.

I quickly heard from many Vermont businesses expressing their concerns about not being able to obtain these needed workers, and I was pleased to join Senator KENNEDY in introducing the Save the Summer Act on March 29, 2004. This commonsense approach would raise the cap on H-2B visas for this fiscal year by 40,000. This is a simple, straightforward, easy-to-understand-and-implement solution to this problem. I was pleased that the bill had bipartisan support when it was introduced and I was hopeful that it could be considered and passed quickly in the Senate. Unfortunately, this was not to be the case.

The next day, on March 30, Senator HATCH introduced the Summer Operations and Services Relief and Reform Act that addressed the H-2B cap problem in a different manner. While I felt that this legislation addressed the problem in a less clear, more complicated way, I was very pleased that the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman, Senator HATCH, and the Judiciary Committee's Immigration Subcommittee chairman, Senator CHAMBLISS, recognized that there was a problem that had to be immediately addressed.

In the normal legislative process, the next step should have been for the two sides to sit down and try to work through the differences between the bills and then quickly pass legislation to solve this problem. However, in this case, the Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee were not in agreement on how to address the matter and began to negotiate among themselves. Unfortunately, they chose not to negotiate with the supporters of the Save the Summer Act until they had reached a consensus. Supposedly, more than a month after the bill was introduced, the Republicans finally reached an agreement amongst themselves.

Although the majority reached a consensus, the business community and the Department of Homeland Security raised concerns about the Republican agreement. Thus, the Republicans have gone back to the drawing board and are once again negotiating amongst themselves.

It is now the day before the Senate will take its break for the Memorial Day holiday. Many think of Memorial Day weekend as the unofficial beginning of summer. However, almost 2 months after legislation had been introduced, businesses around the country that were counting on the Congress to solve this problem still do not have an answer. Summer may have begun, but for many businesses, this summer season will not be something to celebrate.

Senator KENNEDY and I introduced a simple, easy solution to this problem on March 29 that would have allowed businesses to obtain the employees they desperately need for the summer, while giving the Congress the opportunity to address the long-term issues with the H2-B program. However, the Republican leadership will not allow the Senate to pass this legislation with an overwhelming vote.

It has been almost 2 months since legislation was introduced, almost 3 months since the problem arose, and the Republicans are still debating the issue internally. The Senate should pass the Save the Summer Act immediately and help our Nation's small businesses.●

HONORING RETIRING TEACHERS

● Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to honor five outstanding

women who have dedicated themselves to the teaching profession and will soon retire after spending more than 30 years each as educators. Each of these women will end their career at the close of this school year at Elm Elementary School in Burr Ridge, IL, having touched the lives of hundreds of children, parents, and colleagues.

Catherine Nufer has been teaching for 36 years and has been recognized for her achievements in teaching writing and social studies. Her students have consistently excelled in State standardized tests in these areas. Ms. Nufer has taken courses over the years to keep current on new teaching standards, always striving to bring a fresh approach to the classroom.

Virginia Bojan is retiring after 33 years of teaching. She is known for her excellence in teaching language arts and science. To her students and colleagues, Ms. Bojan will be remembered most for her pleasant demeanor and use of humor in classroom lessons. Laughter and joy have been central to her teaching style, which will surely be missed at Elm Elementary School.

Nancy Taylor has been teaching for 34 years, during which time she led district-wide curriculum development initiatives in the areas of language arts and mathematics. Under her soft-spoken, gentle approach to teaching, hundreds of students have learned and flourished. She will be remembered for always striving to care for and understand each child as an individual.

Beverly Oliveri is retiring after 34 years of teaching. She has demonstrated leadership on curriculum development committees which have advanced the way mathematics is taught in District 181. Ms. Oliveri will be remembered by students and colleagues for her unique practice of utilizing storytelling in her classroom lessons, helping students to grasp new concepts by applying them to humorous real-life situations.

Patricia Trudicks has been teaching at Elm Elementary School throughout all 36 years of her teaching career. She was instrumental in introducing technology as an instructional tool and also played a vital role in developing Elm Elementary's Media Resource Center, which offers students and teachers access to educational enrichment materials. Ms. Trudicks has constructed creative, hands-on displays in the media resource center, leaving the hundreds of students she has served with educational experiences they will never forget.

I am honored to have this opportunity to publicly recognize these five women, who have dedicated their professional lives to educating children. They have made an invaluable impact on the minds and hearts of the hundreds of students they have served, providing their students with a broad base of knowledge that has endured well beyond their elementary school years. These five teachers are fine examples of excellence in education, and I proud-

ly salute them for their dedicated service and wish them well in their retirement.●

NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

● Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, there are 542,000 reasons that we should all be involved in recognizing May as National Foster Care Month. These reasons represent the number of children currently in the foster care system, roughly 126,000 of whom are waiting to be adopted. Over 70 percent of these children entered foster care because of abuse or neglect. And, the average length of time that these children stay in foster care is almost 3 years.

For many of these children, the wait for a loving family where they are nurtured, comforted, and protected is endless. Every year, 25,000 children "age out" of foster care because they reach adulthood without ever being found a permanent home. These children are more likely to drop out of school and are more likely to be unemployed, welfare dependent, and homeless. In fact, roughly 30 percent of the Nation's homeless are former foster children.

As Senators, we cannot allow over half a million children to continue languishing in the foster care system, vulnerable to facing these negative outcomes. During this National Foster Care Month or at any other appropriate time throughout the year, I ask that you focus attention on the need to find secure and supportive families for these children.

Nurturing and stable environments can allow these children to achieve great success by helping them to overcome the challenges posed by involvement in the foster care system. One such example of the effect that a nurturing and stable environment can have on a foster child exists right in Congress's own backyard—the Mayor of Washington, DC, Anthony Williams. Mayor Williams' mother once told the story that when she visited the orphanage where she first met her son, she was told by the workers that he was not as advanced developmentally and intellectually as he should be for a child his age. These workers even indicated that little Anthony might have to be sent to an institution. And, they were right. His mother sent him off to two of the most prestigious institutions in our country—Yale University for college and Harvard University for law school.

I invite all Members to come to the Senate floor to speak about former foster children such as Mayor Williams, about foster children currently waiting for loving families, or about the significance of foster care in your own life, in your State, or in the life of a child. But, I want to ask more of you than simply sharing these stories. I would like to urge my colleagues to commit their efforts to ensuring that we institute legislative reforms for the child welfare system that will emphasize permanency for foster children,

whether that be reunification with families, adoption, or teaching youth skills to be able to live self-sufficiently after emancipation. The time is now for us to reform a foster care system that does not adequately address the needs of our most vulnerable children and families.

One of the areas that will require the greatest reform is the Federal financing structure of child welfare services. Currently, the Federal financing system is structured in a way that provides the greatest financial support for a child by the Federal Government when that child is in the foster care system. In other words, it creates a funding incentive to keep children in foster care, rather than moving them towards re-unification or adoption. We must revise this system so that funding matches the Federal priorities. This means that Government should fund the programs and approaches that are actually working to provide safety and permanency to children. Decisions regarding the placement of a child should not be influenced by the type of placement that would offer the greatest resources for the child, but instead be based on the best interests of the child. Adequate resources should be available for children involved in any area of the child welfare system. Therefore, the money and resources should follow the child, whether that is in foster care, in an adoptive home, or after re-unification with the biological family. The current financing system includes a patchwork of programs, many of which are funded through discretionary spending that is vulnerable to cuts in the appropriations process. Reforms must be instituted that allow the child welfare system to encompass a more comprehensive approach that includes prevention, re-unification services, adequate foster care services, adoption resources, and post-permanency support.

The time has come to fix these problems, to focus on the solutions in order to help our most vulnerable children. The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care released a report this week that summarizes a 1-year study of the foster care system. This study includes the feedback of advocates, State service providers, lawmakers, judges, and former foster youth around the country. I respectfully ask my colleagues to carefully look at the recommendations of not only the Pew Commission but of the hundreds of other individuals, groups, and States that have studied this system and have provided valuable ideas for reform.

Further, I hope that the leadership in the Finance Committee will hold hearings on the topic of Federal financing of the child welfare system to fully explore the problems in this system and the proposals for reform that will help to resolve these problems. I also ask all Members of Congress to make these reforms a priority during the remainder of this session and during the next session of Congress. I am personally committed to seeing reform done within