

FEDERAL YOUTH COORDINATION  
ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I am here this evening to speak about the Federal Youth Coordination Act. This act was written in response to a report issued by the White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth in 2003. This task force report indicated that 25 percent of U.S. teens are at risk of not having productive lives, not growing up to be people who can hold a job, who are free of substance abuse, and are able to contribute to the society. The estimate is that roughly 10 million young people fall into this category.

This is a very difficult time to be a young person. As almost anyone in our culture knows, we have drug and alcohol abuse, we are the most violent Nation in the world for young people in terms of homicide and suicide, and roughly one-half of the young people growing up in our country today are going to be growing up without both biological parents, so they have undergone a significant amount of dysfunction at some point in their lives.

In response, the Congress, being generous and compassionate, has devised 339 Federal programs which serve youth and their families. There are 339 of these programs. These programs are disbursed over 12 different agencies. The greatest number are in the Department of Education, Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice. Some are in the Department of Labor, some are in the Department of Agriculture, and so on; and so they are spread all over. The cost of all of these programs was \$223.5 billion in 2003. So it is a huge part of the Federal budget.

Now, the problem is that these programs are not coordinated in any way at all. They have kind of grown like Topsy. In many cases, they have no measurable quantifiable goals; and in many more cases, no one really knows whether they even serve the purpose which they were first intended to serve. So we have a very confused picture as far as these programs are concerned.

The General Accounting Office refers to this confused government response to troubled youth as a perfect example of "mission fragmentation." The GAO recommends that programs with similar goals, target populations, and services be coordinated, consolidated and streamlined.

As a result of this report and the GAO commentary on it, the Federal Youth Coordination Act was written. It was written in response to the White House Task Force, and it creates a Federal Youth Coordinating Council. Now, this council is designed to do several things.

First of all, it is composed of members from each of the 12 agencies that have these youth-serving agencies. Also included on the council are some

young people who actually have been in dysfunctional situations, young people who have been in foster care, and young people who have been through the system and have seen some of the problems. So what this council will do is to meet regularly, at least four times a year; and they are charged with these different responsibilities:

First of all, evaluate youth-serving programs. Does each program really serve any good objective? What programs are duplication? What programs could be combined; what programs could be eliminated?

Secondly, coordinate among Federal agencies with programs serving youth. There may be a program in Health and Human Services that mirrors a program in the Department of Education. Why have that duplication? Why is there no coordination or even communication across agency lines?

Improve Federal programs that serve at-risk youth. What works; what does not work? What types of programs should we be promoting? What should we be putting more money into and what should we be defunding, and so on?

Fourthly, recommend improvements in an annual report. The commission has to file a report with Congress which examines exactly what they have been doing and what they have accomplished.

And then probably most important of all, set and meet quantifiable goals and objectives. In other words, each program has to have a measurable quantifiable goal, a series of goals and benchmarks as to whether they are accomplishing anything or not. We think this is critical in any type of program that is going to move forward.

Lastly, hold Federal agencies accountable for achieving results. Of course, accountability in government sometimes is lacking. So I urge support of this bill. We think it is very important.

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IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to commend my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY), for making tonight on the floor of this House her 100th statement concerning the war in Iraq.

Over the course of the last 15 months, the gentlewoman from California has made a very substantial contribution to the debate concerning that tragic event in Iraq, the circumstances surrounding it, and also making recommendations as to what we might do in the future to correct the terrible mistakes and injustices that have been perpetrated against the Iraqi people and against our own country. I commend her for doing so.

She and I were among those 143 Members of this House who voted against

the resolution that was submitted by the Bush administration to authorize the war in Iraq. It has now come to my attention, and to, I think, many other Members of this House, that there are a growing number of people here, as well as around the country, that understand that this war was a deep and tragic mistake and that the rationale presented for it was based upon falsehoods. The statements which came from various people within the administration were completely false and misleading. Among those initially was the idea that Iraq had something to do with the attack on our country of September 11, 2001. That, of course, was completely and totally false.

Additionally, it was stated by members of the Bush administration that there was some connection between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. That has been proven to be completely and totally false. Again, we were told that there were so-called weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, chemical and biological weapons, and the President himself in this House made allegations with regard to the development of a nuclear weapons program by Iraq. That too has been shown to be totally and completely false.

This administration has entirely twisted and distorted the facts and the information and the intelligence to try to fit a policy decision which they made based on no facts or information, but based upon a decision which was made by this administration to suit their own private, personal, and political objectives. The consequence of that has been the loss of more than 1,760 lives of American service men and women for no good reason. That war was unnecessary, unjust; and we need to face up to it. The Members of this House need to face up to it.

We have, over this period of time, been confronted with a gross amount of information which has been totally misleading and totally false. The administration contracted with private-public relations firms to persuade the American people of the falsity of their notions with regard to weapons of mass destruction and the relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda and the attack of September 11, now known to be totally and completely false.

And the administration apparently continues to seek to mislead the country. We have just recently, just today, a report over CNN broadcasting which quotes two separate people in Iraq on two separate circumstances with regard to an attack that took place on July 13 and another that took place on July 24, just yesterday. Let me read into the RECORD what those news releases coming out of Iraq say:

A Sunday, July 24, news release says: "The terrorists are attacking the infrastructure, the ISF, and all of Iraq. They are enemies of humanity without religion or any sort of ethics. They have attacked my community today, and I will now take the fight to the terrorists, said one Iraqi man who preferred not to be identified."