

feel very strongly that the two NOSB handler seats versus the farmer slots are a more appropriate avenue for such companies to be represented on the board. While I am disappointed that this House provision was included in the final farm bill conference agreement, I will continue to support the nomination of independent organic farmers to the NOSB farmer seats and the unique perspective they bring to the board.

Ranking Member STABENOW must be applauded for the newly combined Local Agriculture Market Program, LAMP, that also secures \$50 million by 2023 and will allow the work of local food programs to continue bringing fresh, local, and nutritious food to the tables of Vermonters and Americans everywhere. For Vermont farmers hoping to diversify and remain viable, this bill legalizes the growth and sale of hemp as an agricultural commodity and allows growers to be eligible for crop insurance. The compromise addresses concerns raised by criminal justice advocates regarding the hemp farming ban of individuals with drug-related felony convictions, and I am glad Vermonters will more fully be able to take advantage of this durable and profitable crop.

The conference agreement continues the proud tradition of providing nutritional assistance to our fellow Americans with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, and wholeheartedly rejects the provisions included in the House bill that would have cut food access for millions of families. This bill continues our commitment to worldwide stability and productivity with programs like McGovern-Dole, Food for Peace, the Global Crop Diversity Trust, as well as valuable research to support farmers here at home and around the world. When people here and abroad do not have to wonder where their next meal may come from, children do better in school, workers are more productive, and our world is stronger.

Our Nation's conservation tradition is reinforced in this bill, with significant funding and necessary improvements to programs like the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program conserving family farms, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program fighting nitrogen and phosphorus runoff, and the Conservation Reserve Program in which I was able to include a fix allowing Vermonters to use the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program to further protect water quality where they were disqualified before. The worst of the House of Representative's forestry provisions were negotiated out of this bill to make sure we are protecting our forestland based on the best available science and expertise.

This bipartisan farm bill provides critical economic development support to address the unique challenges and needs faced by our rural communities. The Rural Economic Area Partnership,

REAP, Zone is renewed to continue developing our rural economy and the Northern Border Regional Commission, NBRC, is reauthorized and increased to \$33 million, with an additional \$5 million to build capacity in eligible counties. This bill also expands the eligible territory for NBRC investment to all fourteen counties in Vermont. The Commission will build upon the more than \$10.5 million in matching funds and \$18 million in total economic development and infrastructure projects invested in Vermont since 2010. The bill reauthorizes the good work of State Rural Development Councils through 2023 and reestablishes the position of Under Secretary for Rural Development that had been eliminated, in the 2017 USDA reorganization. I am pleased that I was able to reach a compromise for a 10-year reauthorization of the National Oilheat Research Alliance, NORA, a vital program that funds the development of improved and efficient oilheat technology to increase safety and reduce consumer costs.

I would be here all night if I were to talk about all of the wins for Vermont that were included in this farm bill, so I will close by saying that the 2018 farm bill should be viewed as a watershed moment in much needed bipartisanship and compromise. It will help millions of Americans, farmers, families, and children and will protect our natural resources, economic vitality, and public health. This is why we are here: to help people who need it, protect our national security, and ensure our planet is productive and clean for this generation and for generations to come. This bill must pass the House of Representatives and be signed by the President to deliver real help to real Americans everywhere.

JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have long supported juvenile justice programs, and I have long supported runaway and homeless youth programs. During the 20 years I served as the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee and in my current role as the vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee, I have championed bipartisan reauthorizations and supported funding for these programs, overcoming the House of Representatives, which zeroes out juvenile justice programs in its appropriations bills year after year. These programs make a real and lasting difference in the lives of the children and teens they serve. The two programs are funded separately in separate appropriations subcommittees, and their reauthorizations have traditionally moved separately.

I am pleased the Senate today passed the long-debated Juvenile Justice Reform Act. This legislation makes needed, comprehensive, and long overdue updates to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. It mandates research to study, identify, and address disproportionate minority contact in

the juvenile justice system and separates young offenders from adult jails and prisons. It also reauthorizes funding for key juvenile justice programs. Funding for these vital programs is key to preventing youth from coming in contact with the juvenile justice system and ensuring youth have the opportunity to get the help they need to avoid repeating the cycle. Reducing recidivism is not just the moral thing to do; it saves future State and Federal dollars.

The Grassley substitute amendment, which passed the Senate this evening, reauthorizes the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act at a lower level than I support, and a lower level than is supported by the providers and advocates in the field who know firsthand what the actual needs are to help these youths. It also fails to make important programmatic improvements that Senator COLLINS and I have been working on for years. These improvements include provisions to prevent and respond to human trafficking—to which runaway and homeless youth are particularly vulnerable—by requiring staff training to identify when a child entering their program has been a victim. Training program staff to identify young victims of trafficking helps ensure staff refers children and teenagers to appropriate services and takes steps to prevent their further traumatization. These young people have experienced major, unimaginable trauma, and we need to make sure they receive the right counseling and treatment to help them recover. Our reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act also includes important non-discrimination language to ensure all youth who try to access programs can do so regardless of their faith, race, or sexual orientation. Unfortunately, these improvements will have to wait.

While we have much to celebrate with the passage of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act, I am disappointed that some Members on the other side of the aisle demanded the inclusion of an extension of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and lowering its authorization without the improvements contained in my legislation with Senator COLLINS. The House passed and the Democratic hotline cleared H.R. 6964, a clean version of the juvenile justice Reform Act with no reference to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. Unfortunately, Senate Republicans on the Judiciary Committee refused to run the hotline on the Republican side. This in effect held hostage these important juvenile justice reforms to leverage authorization cuts to a completely unrelated program.

These two pieces of legislation have not moved in the same reauthorization bill in 30 years. They are funded through different appropriations bills, administered by different departments, and their authorizations serve different purposes. Senator COLLINS and I have worked for years on a comprehensive bipartisan reauthorization

of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and expressed our concern with including a lower reauthorization with no improvements as part of Juvenile Justice Reform. Unfortunately, members on the other side were willing to hold up passage of Juvenile Justice Reform for yet another Congress, over an unrelated program.

In the interest of ensuring programmatic improvements and reauthorization of juvenile justice programs, Senator COLLINS and I agreed to a 2-year reauthorization of Runaway and Homeless Youth programs at an 8-percent reduction from its last authorized levels. Although I am disappointed that Runaway and Homeless Youth programs are reauthorized even in the short term without needed programmatic improvements, I look forward to working with members of the House and Senate to pass a bipartisan, comprehensive Runaway and Homeless Youth reauthorization in the 116th Congress.

It is my understanding that the House Committee on Education and Workforce will prioritize a comprehensive reauthorization of Runaway and Homeless Youth next Congress, and I hope the Senate Judiciary Committee will do the same. If so, we have a chance to make a real difference in the lives of some of the most vulnerable children in our Nation. It is time we seize it.

RECIPROCAL ACCESS TO TIBET ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this evening the Senate unanimously passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018. I was one of the earliest cosponsors of this bill, and I strongly support it. For far too long, the Chinese Government has tightly restricted access to Tibet, preventing U.S. diplomats and journalists from reporting on the systematic human rights abuses and destruction of Tibetan culture perpetrated by the Chinese Government and arbitrarily preventing Tibetan-Americans from visiting their families. Passing this legislation represents a strong, bipartisan step toward addressing that decades-long injustice. I would like to thank Senator RUBIO and Congressman MCGOVERN for their work on this legislation over several years.

The Chinese Government arbitrarily requires a special permit for a foreign diplomat, reporter, or tourist to visit Tibet, a requirement China does not impose for travel to any other provincial-level jurisdiction, even Xinjiang. The Chinese Government frequently denies requests for these permits to Tibet. Even when it does grant permits, it generally requires foreigners to be accompanied at all times by a government-designated guide. This arbitrary system not only makes it exceptionally difficult to report on the situation in Tibet, but it also gives the Chinese Government significant leverage, which it reportedly exploits in

various ways, over persons who hope to obtain a permit.

In a 2015 white paper, the Chinese Government claimed that, under Chinese rule, “Tibet has been transformed from a poor and backward society to one that is advanced in both economy and culture.” Setting aside that this statement would look perfectly at home among the discredited justifications for 19th century colonialism, if it were true, then one would expect China to welcome the world to witness its rule in Tibet; yet in 2016, the Washington Post reported that Tibet “is harder to visit as a journalist than North Korea.” International media cannot even enter Tibet except on infrequent, tightly controlled tours organized by the Chinese Government. The situation is much the same for U.S. diplomats.

It is not just journalists and officials whose freedom of movement is restricted. Tibetan-Americans attempting to visit their homeland report undergoing a discriminatory Chinese visa process, different from what is typically required for American citizens, and often find their requests arbitrarily denied. I have heard about this problem directly from my Tibetan-American constituents in Vermont. I have spoken about it with the leader of the Tibetan Government-in-exile.

This issue has even touched a Tibetan-American member of my staff, Nima Binara. His 89-year-old grandmother, Kaedungkhangsar Yangchen Dolkar, was a naturalized American citizen who hoped to see her homeland and her relatives one last time before she passed away, a visit the Chinese Government refused to grant. Denying a person’s right to visit their homeland is a petty display of authoritarian control and one that we should not tolerate in the 21st century.

I vividly remember visiting Tibet in 1988 and meeting its warmhearted people, appreciating its profound culture, and seeing its breathtaking landscape. With this legislation, we are now a step closer to the day when all American tourists, journalists, and diplomats can make such a trip without undue restrictions. This legislation will also make it more difficult for China to hide its atrocious human rights record in Tibet behind a cloak of isolation. It will make it easier for Tibetans inside Tibet to interact with the outside world and more likely for the world to realize that Tibetans are a distinct people who deserve their right to self-determination.

The House has already unanimously passed this bill. I urge the President to sign it into law without delay.

REMEMBERING BECKY WEICHHAND

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, during this season of Advent, millions of Americans join Christians around the world to celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ.

A central tenet of Christianity is born in the belief that Jesus is the Light of the World.

On December 25, we celebrate the light, the hope, and the joy our Lord and Savior brings into the world.

Today, I come to the floor of the U.S. Senate to pay tribute to a servant of Christ who dedicated her life to bring light, hope, and joy to children and families around the world.

Her name is Becky Weichhand.

Becky blazed a trail of hope and love to spread joy to children, especially those awaiting adoption.

To those who knew her best, Becky was an unconditional prayer warrior, who graciously shared love and loyalty to friends and strangers alike.

By all accounts, Becky shared uncommon devotion in her advocacy for children, especially those in our Nation’s foster care system.

Since 2014, Becky served as executive director of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

Before that, she served as director of policy, where she shined light on the needs of children here in the United States and abroad, including the United Kingdom, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Cambodia, Vietnam, South Korea, and Haiti.

Since first joining the corps of dedicated professionals working to help the foster youth community, Becky had a plan.

She had a plan for kids who went to bed each night praying for a forever home.

She had a plan for young people who were growing up without a mom or dad.

She had a plan to connect as many kids as possible with a forever family.

Becky worked tirelessly to educate, organize and advocate here on Capitol Hill and at the grassroots.

She devoted her life and career to making dreams come true for adoptive parents and their children.

Among her priorities and achievements, I know that Becky was committed to growing the Foster Youth Internship Program that connects foster youth and congressional offices.

The program provides opportunities for foster youth to work on Capitol Hill.

Through this program, foster youth collaborate and bring real-life perspective to the policymaking tables.

I have been fortunate to have an intern through this program who worked with my staff to help develop Federal child welfare reforms.

They identified more effective ways to serve foster kids, including those who age out of the system.

Becky also worked to grow the Angels in Adoption Program.

It brings recognition to families who go above and beyond the call to action in their local communities to open their hearts and homes to children awaiting adoption.

Shining light on the good deeds and unmet needs of others was her way of bringing light to the world.