

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.