

My agenda for America is one that values health care and education and hard work. Those are American values, and they were on display in the bill the President just vetoed. I regret the President's decision, and millions of other Americans do, too.

NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

Mr. CARDIN. This Saturday, November 17, is the eighth annual National Adoption Day. On this day, courts across the country will open their doors to finalize the adoption of thousands of children from foster care.

This month, four Maryland cities will celebrate with events: Baltimore, Urbana, Rockville, and our capital city of Annapolis. In Baltimore on Saturday, November 17, the Circuit Court for Baltimore City will finalize the adoptions of more than 40 children. The court will host an event with face painting, arts and crafts, a dessert reception, and a commemorative photography session. Local businesses have donated toys and gift certificates for the children. Also, on Saturday, November 17, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Services, will host an appreciation luncheon in Rockville. In Urbana on Sunday, November 18, an organization called Adoptive Families and Friends will host a celebration at the Urbana Public Library. They will have balloons, refreshments, entertainment, and representatives of adoption agencies, cultural groups, and support groups. Finally, in Annapolis on Thursday, November 29, the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County will finalize between 10 to 15 adoptions and then host a reception for the new families and guests.

Mr. President, celebrations similar to these four in Maryland will occur all across our Nation in the days to come. The new families will serve as the inspiration for countless more adoptions in the years to come. By facilitating these adoptions, the lawyers, foster care workers, child advocates, judges, and others are building strong families and stronger communities.

This is my first year in the Senate, but for several years in the House of Representatives, I had the privilege of serving as ranking member on the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources, which handled issues related to families, foster care, and adoptions. Its new name is the Income Security and Family Support Subcommittee. In 1997, the committee worked in a bipartisan manner to pass the Adoption and Safe Families Act. That law created the Adoption Incentives Program, which provides incentive payments to States to promote adoptions out of foster care, with additional incentives provided for the adoption of foster children with special needs. Since that time, we have seen a substantial increase in the number of those adoptions—more than 60 percent.

Then in 2003, Representative DAVE CAMP and I authored, and Congress

passed, the Adoption Promotion Act. It was introduced in the Senate by Senators GRASSLEY and LANDRIEU, and became law on December 2, 2003. That bill reauthorized the program providing States with incentives for increasing overall adoptions, and it created bonuses for placing older children in permanent homes. It also authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services to penalize States that fail to provide the Federal Government adequate data on adoptions and foster care services.

That law will expire next year, and to ensure that these vital programs can continue, Congress will need to reauthorize it. We still need more families willing to bring children into their homes. More than 114,000 American children are still awaiting adoption, and half of them are over 9 years old. These are the children who have the least chance of being adopted and the greatest chance of spending the rest of their childhood in foster care, so we must do more to help find adoptive families for them. I will be listening closely to the people of Maryland to learn how we can improve upon current laws.

Despite all the work we have done to promote adoptions, more than 25,000 age out of foster care every year. That means that they reach adulthood without ever having received permanent placement with a family. In September, a few of my colleagues and I participated in a wonderful event sponsored by the Orphan Foundation of America. We went to the Mansfield Room and helped put together care packages that are sent to college students across the country. It is something that many of us who have put children through college don't automatically think about. We have sent our college-age kids care packages with clothing, food, and other items. But what about the students without parents? This organization, with funding from Federal Express and many other companies, assembles and ships more than 3,700 packages to college campuses every year. I had the honor of meeting six talented students from Maryland—four from Morgan State University, one from the University of Maryland College Park, and one from the College of Southern Maryland. They have all the brains, promise, and enthusiasm of their fellow students, but they aged out of foster care, so they need our support to make the transition into adulthood a smoother one.

Mr. President, I believe every child deserves a loving family and a safe place to call home. We in Congress have the power to make that a reality for many of the more than 100,000 foster children now waiting for a family. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the children who will be adopted this week and in working on policies that will help children who remain in foster care to get the opportunities they deserve.

THE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today is the American Cancer Society's 31st annual Great American Smokeout. This is an annual event designed to encourage the 45.8 million Americans who smoke tobacco to kick the habit. First held in 1977, American Smokeout Day challenges smokers to give up their cigarettes for 24 hours, in the hope that their decision to quit will be permanent.

Each year, approximately 440,000 Americans die from tobacco-related diseases. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths for both men and women, accounting for one in five deaths in the United States. In Maryland alone in 2005, there were more than 7,000 smoking-related deaths, many from lung cancer.

Americans know much more today about the dangers of tobacco than we did 31 years ago when this event first took place. We know cigarettes contain more than 250 chemicals that are known to be harmful, including hydrogen cyanide, which is used in making chemical weapons; carbon monoxide, which is found in car exhaust fumes; and ammonia, which is used in household cleaners.

We have also learned that smoking affects not only tobacco users, but also the people around them. Recent research has demonstrated the serious hazards of secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke causes nearly 3,400 lung cancer deaths and 46,000 heart disease deaths in adult nonsmokers in the United States each year, and it is especially harmful to young children. Tragically, secondhand smoke is cited as the cause of approximately 430 sudden infant death syndrome, SIDS, fatalities in the United States each year.

My home State of Maryland is 1 of 22 States that have enacted laws banning smoking in nearly all public places. Gov. Martin O'Malley signed the Clean Indoor Air Act of 2007 into law on May 17, 2007. It will go into effect on February 1, 2008. This law specifically prohibits smoking in public meeting places, public transportation vehicles, and indoor places of employment, including all restaurants and bars.

We also know it is never too late to quit. There are significant health benefits to quitting, even after 30 or more years of smoking. Studies have shown that quitting at age 30 reduces one's chances of dying from smoking-related diseases by more than 90 percent, and quitting by age 50 reduces one's chances by more than 50 percent.

Today is also a prime opportunity for our seniors who still smoke to quit. Doing so will save overall health care costs and save lives. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 9.3 percent of Americans age 65 and older smoke cigarettes, and nearly 300,000 seniors die of smoking-related diseases every year. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have estimated that smoking-related health problems accounted for