

Statement of

# **The Honorable Patrick Leahy**

United States Senator  
Vermont  
June 3, 2004

Remarks by Senator Patrick Leahy,  
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee,  
On The Boys & Girls Clubs of America Bill, S. 2363  
June 3, 2004

I am pleased that the Committee is considering legislation that Senator Hatch and I introduced together to reauthorize and expand the Department of Justice grant program for Boys & Girls Clubs. I thank Chairman Hatch for moving our bipartisan legislation and thank Senators DeWine, Kohl, Biden, Sessions, Feinstein, Craig, Durbin, Chambliss, Edwards and Schumer on the Committee for cosponsoring our legislation to support the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

Too often the public sees Republicans and Democrats disagreeing. From time to time, even Senator Hatch and I disagree on important issues. But when it comes to the Boys & Girls Clubs of America there is no doubt that we see eye-to-eye: This bill shows the unified support of Republicans and Democrats for the good works of Boys & Girls Clubs across the nation.

Children are the future of our country, and we have a responsibility to make sure they are safe and secure. I know firsthand how well Boys & Girls Clubs work and what topnotch organizations they are. When I was a prosecutor in Vermont, I was convinced of the great need for Boys & Girls Clubs because we rarely encountered children from these kinds of programs. In fact, after I became a U.S. Senator, a police chief was such a big fan that he asked me to help fund a Boys & Girls Club in his district rather than helping him get a couple more police officers.

In Vermont, Boys & Girls Clubs have succeeded in preventing crime and supporting our children. The first Club was established in Burlington 62 years ago. Now we have 22 club sites operating throughout the State: seven clubs in Brattleboro, one in Springfield, two clubs in Burlington, one in Winooski, two clubs in Montpelier, five clubs in Randolph, one club in Rutland, two clubs in Vergennes and one in Bristol. There are 10 additional project sites that will be on board and serving kids by the end of 2005: one in Bennington, two in Burlington, one in Duxbury, one in St. Johnsbury, one in Hardwick, three in Randolph and one in Ludlow. These clubs will serve well over 10,000 kids statewide.

As a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have pushed for more Federal funding for Boys & Girls Clubs. Since 1998, Congress has increased Federal support for Boys & Girls Clubs from \$20 million to \$80 million in this year. Due in large part to this increase in funding, there now exist 3,300 Boys & Girls Clubs in all 50 States serving more than 3.6 million young people. Because of these successes, I was both surprised and disappointed to see that the

President requested a reduction of \$20 million for FY 2005. That request will leave thousands of children and their Clubs behind and we cannot allow such a thing to happen.

In the 107th Congress, Senator Hatch and I worked together to pass the 21st Century Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act, which included a provision to reauthorize Justice Department grants to establish new Boys & Girls Clubs nationwide. By authorizing \$80 million in DOJ grants for each of the fiscal years through 2005, we sought to establish 1,200 additional Boys & Girls Clubs nationwide. This was to bring the number of Boys & Girls Clubs to 4,000, serving no less than 5 million young people. The bill we introduce today will build upon this: We authorize Justice Department grants at \$80 million for FY 2006, \$85 million for FY 2007, \$90 million for FY 2008, \$95 million for FY 2009 and \$100 million for FY 2010 to Boys & Girls Clubs to help establish 1,500 additional Boys & Girls Clubs across the nation with the goal of having 5,000 Boys & Girls Clubs in operation by December 31, 2010.

If we had a Boys & Girls Club in every community, prosecutors in our country would have a lot less work to do because of the values that are being instilled in children from the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Each time I visit a club in Vermont, I am approached by parents, educators, teachers, grandparents and law enforcement officers who tell me "Keep doing this! These clubs give our children the chance to grow up free of drugs, gangs and crime."

You cannot argue that these are just Democratic or Republican ideas, or Conservative or Liberal ideas - they are simply good sense ideas. We need safe havens where our youth - the future of our country - can learn and grow up free from the influences of drugs, gangs and crime. That is why Boys & Girls Clubs are so important to our children.

I hope all Members of the Committee will support our bipartisan bill to expand Federal support for the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Our country's strength and ultimate success lies with our children. Our greatest responsibility is to help them inhabit this century the best way possible and we can help do that by supporting the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.