

Statement of

The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator

Vermont

July 17, 2008

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PATRICK LEAHY,

CHAIRMAN, SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE,

OPENING STATEMENT

EXECUTIVE BUSINESS MEETING

JULY 17, 2008

I apologize for the unusual starting time for today's meeting, but it became necessary to accommodate the proceedings this morning to mark the 100th anniversary of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. A number of us attended ceremonies at the FBI building to recognize the dedication of the men and women who work at the FBI.

I thank the Senators who are here, and I look forward to bipartisan cooperation so that we can complete our work efficiently this morning. Our agenda has important items held over from our previous meeting. They include the bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, our bipartisan OPEN FOIA bill and the bipartisan William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act.

In addition, we have before us the Fairness in Nursing Home Arbitration Act, the Fugitive Information Networked Database Act, the Methamphetamine Production Prevention Act and the National Guard and Reservists Debt Relief Act.

I want to commend Senator Kohl for his leadership on the juvenile justice bill and thank Senator Specter, who began his tenure on this Committee in 1981 as the chair of a Juvenile Justice Subcommittee, for their work on this important measure. We have improved the law and made progress after much hard work.

July 4th marked the 42nd anniversary of the Freedom of Information Act. The OPEN FOIA Act builds upon the OPEN Government Act that we passed last year, which made the first major reforms to FOIA in more than a decade. The current bill requires that when a statutory exemption to FOIA is intended to be enacted, Congress state so explicitly.

I hope that today we will be able to report important legislation to reauthorize the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Act. This bill would strengthen our efforts to stop the abhorrent practice of human trafficking around the world. Our bill enhances protections for victims of these terrible crimes. Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery, involving victims who are forced, defrauded or coerced into sexual or labor exploitation. These practices continue to victimize hundreds of thousands around the world, mostly women and children, and we must do all that we can to be more effective in confronting this continuing problem. I thank Senator Biden for his leadership.

I hope that we will be able to do our work and complete our consideration of a number of these matters quickly. Later today I expect that the Senate will consider and confirm two more lifetime appointments to the Federal courts. We have already confirmed more judges last year and this than were confirmed in the entire previous Congress when a Republican majority was considering President Bush's nominations.