

Statement of
The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
Vermont
March 2, 2011

Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
"Helping Law Enforcement Find Missing Children"
March 2, 2011

I want to thank Senator Klobuchar for holding this important hearing to discuss a topic critical to the safety of our Nation's children. Today, the Committee will explore whether law enforcement has the tools it needs to quickly locate missing and exploited children.

I was concerned to learn recently that there is a gap in the law that prohibits state and local law enforcement from obtaining information from the Internal Revenue Service that could be used to investigate cases involving missing and exploited children. I am pleased to cosponsor Senator Klobuchar's bipartisan Access to Information about Missing Children Act. This important legislation will close this gap.

According to the Department of Justice, approximately 200,000 children in the United States are abducted by family members each year. Many of these cases involve custody disputes between estranged spouses who may assume false identities and travel the country to escape detection. We must remain vigilant to ensure that law enforcement has the necessary tools to protect our children, without compromising the personal privacy of Americans. I hope that the witnesses today will share their thoughts on how to strike the proper balance.

When the Federal Government has information critical to protecting children, it should be shared with the proper authorities. I thank Senator Klobuchar and Senator Cornyn for their leadership on this bipartisan issue, and I look forward to working with them on this important matter.

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