

Statement of
The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
United States Senate
June 28, 2011

**Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Subcommittee On Immigration, Refugees And Border Security
The DREAM Act
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I am very pleased that the Judiciary Committee will consider the DREAM Act today. I have been a cosponsor of this important legislation since it was first introduced in the 107th Congress, and my support today is as strong as ever. I was disappointed when the Senate failed to pass it last December, but I commend Senator Durbin for his persistence in advocating for this bill over the past 10 years.

I also want to recognize the important work that so many affected young men and women have done in support of this legislation. They truly have the courage of their convictions. These are young people who find themselves in an impossible situation and who wish for nothing more than to become lawful, patriotic participants in the country they call home.

Enactment of the DREAM Act will serve the interests of the United States. The DREAM Act encourages and rewards military service. I agree with Secretary Gates and General Powell that our Armed Services will be stronger for encouraging more participation by those who desire to serve the United States. Allowing these young people to serve America, in their journey to becoming Americans, is something we should all support. It is worth taking a moment to recognize just how extraordinary it is that men and women who are not U.S. citizens fight and die in service of the United States and its citizens. This fact says a lot about America, and it says a lot about the character of those who serve the United States military with less than full citizenship.

In addition to military service, the bill also promotes educational opportunities for America's young people. I can see no purpose that is served by deporting talented young people who find themselves in a situation not of their own making, especially for those who wish for nothing more than to contribute to the country they call home.

Military readiness and higher education are not Democratic or Republican issues, they are American ideals.

To disparage this legislation by calling it "amnesty" ignores our fundamental values of fairness and justice. Almost 30 years ago, in the landmark Supreme Court case *Plyler v. Doe*, the Supreme Court held that children may not be punished for the actions of their parents. I find it hard to believe that anyone would disagree with that basic principle. But to deny these deserving students a chance to gain lawful status and an opportunity to realize their potential does just that. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, and I hope that this hearing will continue the important debate around both the DREAM Act and the need for broader reforms to our

immigration laws.

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