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**LARRY CRAIG**

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Finding a Family for Every Child**  
**by Senators Larry Craig and Mary Landrieu**

Over half a million abused and neglected children in the United States have taken temporary refuge in foster care, and almost 120,000 of these children are currently waiting for adoption. On average, children will remain in foster care for at least three years and, while in care, will move from home to home at least three times. They will be separated from friends, siblings and family. And nearly 19,000 of these children will age out of foster care this year without finding a loving, permanent family. Despite the success of hundreds of foster children, too many of these youth become homeless, incarcerated, or suffer from mental illness.

Last week, ABC's Primetime and Nightline offered a glimpse behind these statistics, illustrating the hope and pain embodied by these numbers. Under the header "Calling All Angels" the programs featured foster youth, birth, foster and adoptive parents who told their stories and shared their experiences.

Foster youth expressed the uncertainty associated with being moved from home to home, the experience of living with different people – some moving between as many as 19 homes, and waiting to find their forever family. Youth who aged out of foster care spoke of the experience of leaving foster care to live on their own with no stable family to rely on. Foster parents, caseworkers, and other child welfare workers advocated their concern with the type of abuse and neglect these children have suffered, and a commitment to improve the outcome for them.

The Congressional Directors of the nonprofit, nonpartisan Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) and the 196 members of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption support efforts to increase awareness of these issues and find solutions. CCAI, which does not receive government funding, is dedicated to raising awareness among members of Congress about foster youth and orphans and the issues that they face.

A recent survey conducted by ABC and Time magazine found that only one in four Americans say they know about the foster care system. In order to effect true change and help foster children join safe, loving, permanent families, we must ensure that more people know about the state of the foster care system, the challenges faced by these children, and the ways in which we all can help.

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We recognize that, in order to truly impact the lives of children in foster care and improve the system, we must not only focus on the state of the foster care system, and the need for systemic reform, but also emphasize the positive stories and contributions of those who are working to reform the foster care system and to make a lasting difference in the lives of children in foster care through adoption.

This week, CCAI is proud to welcome the fifth annual class of interns who come to work on Capitol Hill through the Congressional Foster Youth Internship Program. These former foster youth spend the summer interning in the offices of members of Congress. And, each year, CCAI and members of Congress partner to recognize *Angels in Adoption*<sup>™</sup> – individuals from all 50 states working to enrich the lives of foster children and orphans. Last year, more than 190 members of Congress participated in this event, making it the year's largest Congressional event pertaining to child welfare. Recipients included judges, foster and adoptive parents, social workers, legislators, philanthropists, doctors and leaders of local and state organizations. Despite their varying backgrounds, all share a dedication to bettering the lives of children in our nation's foster care system and orphans around the world.

As the ABC specials illustrated, these vulnerable children deserve our best effort to improve their lives and circumstances and to provide a safe, loving, and permanent home.

Senator Larry Craig, R-Idaho, and Senator Mary Landrieu, D-LA, are Co-Chairs of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption and Congressional Directors of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. For more information on CCAI, go to [www.ccainstitute.org](http://www.ccainstitute.org).