



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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Statement of Chairman Charles E. Grassley
Senate Finance Committee Executive Session
S. 2010 -- The Elder Justice Act
Thursday, August 3, 2006

I call the committee to order for the purpose of considering an amendment to S. 2010, the Elder Justice Act sponsored by Senators Hatch and Lincoln. Success, they say, has many fathers. I am very hopeful that we will enact the Elder Justice Act this Congress, so I want to establish my lineage with this bill early on. I am glad that several provisions in this bill are a result of the work I did as Chairman of the Senate Aging committee. While I was Chairman of that Committee, we did very important work on nursing home abuse and nursing home standards.

A number of the reforms included in the Elder Justice Act were developed as a byproduct of those oversight activities. We are very fortunate to have Senator John Breaux – the original sponsor of the Elder Justice Act with us here. The Elder Justice Act is his legacy. I want to commend the two current sponsors of the legislation, Senators Hatch and Lincoln. It is a direct result of their commitment to ensuring that every older person is free from abuse, neglect and exploitation that we are here today to consider this important piece of legislation. They have shown great tenacity in advocating for the advancement of this legislation. I am pleased to have worked with the sponsors of the legislation, Senator Hatch and Senator Lincoln, to incorporate some modifications to their bill. I appreciate their willingness to accommodate the committee's concerns in developing their amendment to the bill they introduced earlier in the session.

The committee has a full agenda today, so in the interest of time, I would suggest that we allow the sponsors of the legislation a sufficient amount of time for their remarks. However, I would like to comment briefly on a provision that the sponsors worked with me to incorporate as part of the legislation before the committee today. Placing a loved one in a nursing home is one of the most wrenching and emotional decisions a family must face. Children must assume the role of parents. Seniors are faced with relinquishing some of their freedoms and the comfort and security of their own homes. Families need the best and most accurate information available to help guide them through this difficult and draining decision-making process.

Unfortunately there is not a great deal of consumer friendly, accessible information available to consumers. A family wrestling with the decision about where to place a loved one may not know all of their rights and the types of information available to them. That is why I am pleased that the legislation the committee will consider today includes several improvements that will help consumers to understand the resources available to them and provide critical information about the quality of care in available nursing homes. I am hopeful that these improvements will contribute to better information being available about nursing homes and that this information will help ease what is a trying and emotional process.

At this point, I would recognize my friend and partner on the Senate Finance Committee, Senator Baucus. However, because of a death in the family, he is not able to be here today. Our thoughts and our prayers remain with the Baucus family in this very difficult time.