

Statement of

The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
United States Senate
June 7, 2012

We can report judicial nominees from Oklahoma, Maryland and Florida who had their hearings back on May 9, have the support of their home state Senators and were held over two weeks ago.

I have also included on our agenda a private relief bill at the request of Senator Levin. It appears to be a compelling case for relief. Mr. Chukwueke has overcome a lot. He has overcome poverty, prejudice and a serious medical condition known as neurofibromatosis. Senator Levin describes his bill as a last resort for this young person who has been accepted to the University of Toledo College of Medicine provided his residency status is clarified.

I have also included on our agenda an important bill that follows up on a bipartisan, bicameral effort I have been engaged in for decades. We passed the Justice for All Act in 2004, when the House and Senate had Republican majorities and President George W. Bush signed it into law.

This is a measure in which we included several important pieces of legislation. It includes the Debbie Smith Act, by which we have sought to reduce backlogs in the testing of rape kits around the country. I have worked with Debbie Smith on this measure and thank her for her dedication to this cause. It includes the Innocence Protection Act, a major piece of which was the Kirk Bloodsworth program for post conviction testing of DNA evidence that has led to exoneration of those wrongly convicted. It also includes the Crime Victims Rights Act to ensure that victims have rights to protection and timely notice of proceedings, as well as the right to be heard, the right to restitution, and the right to be treated with fairness and respect.

All together, the Justice for All Reauthorization Act strengthens and reauthorizes these and other key programs that help make the criminal justice system work better and more fairly. If we are serious about seeking justice, we need to ensure that indigent defendants also receive adequate legal representation. I hope that this longtime effort will not become a victim of partisanship this year and that we can continue to work on this important collection of programs together.

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