

**Prepared Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Executive Business Meeting
April 14, 2016**

Today, we have several pieces of legislation on the agenda. We will consider S. 2390, the FBI Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act; S. 2613, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act Reauthorization; and S. 2614, Kevin and Avonte's Law. S. 247, the Expatriate Terrorist Act, will be held over. We also have one nominee who is ripe for consideration: Clare Connors for the District of Hawaii. I believe we can do this nomination by voice vote.

First on the agenda is S. 2390, the FBI Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act. The bill is a product of a true bipartisan effort with Ranking Member Leahy. I want to thank him for his commitment to making these much needed improvements to protections for whistleblowers within the FBI. I also want to thank all of our cosponsors, especially those on this Committee, Senators Tillis, Hatch, and Lee for their support. Finally, I want to thank Senators Feinstein and Flake, who gave this bill a thorough review and whose insightful suggestions we have incorporated into our manager's amendment. We also have incorporated changes as a result of consultation with the Justice Department, and I thank the Attorney General and the FBI Director for their willingness to work with us on this important legislation.

Protections for FBI whistleblowers have not been updated since they were first enacted as part of the Civil Service Reform Act in 1978. Senator Leahy and I, and our cosponsors from both sides of the aisle, want to fix that. FBI employees are the only federal employees who are not protected for reporting wrongdoing to their supervisors. Director Comey has said that he supports providing these protections. The Attorney General has said the Department supports "protecting those who report within their chain of command." This bill would do exactly that.

S. 2390 also provides a more streamlined and independent process for handling whistleblower reprisal cases. Without objection, I will place in the record a longer statement and quite a few letters of support, including some from FBI whistleblowers. I especially want to thank them for their courage and their commitment to good government.

Next we'll consider S. 2613, a bill to extend the key programs that Congress established under the 2006 Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act. This bill's enactment would send a strong message to all Americans about Congress' continued commitment to keeping our Nation's children safe.

Many of us here on this Committee worked very hard on the original version of the Adam Walsh Act, which is named for a six year-old who was tragically murdered in 1981. President George W. Bush signed that legislation on the 25th anniversary of Adam Walsh's abduction. Senators Hatch, Schumer, and Feinstein—who cosponsored the Senate version of that legislation when it was first introduced in the 109th Congress—joined me to introduce this reauthorization bill on March 1st. Ranking Member Leahy also is a cosponsor and I appreciate his support.

John Walsh, the father of Adam Walsh, worked closely with us on the development of the 2006 Adam Walsh Act as well as the bill before us today. Reauthorizing the statute is a priority for him and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

The Adam Walsh Act was enacted in response to notorious cases involving children who had been targeted by adult criminals, many of them repeat sex offenders. The Act also established several programs that are key to its successful implementation. The bill before us would extend the authorization for these programs. SOMA, or the Sex Offender Management Assistance Program, for example, helps states offset the costs of Adam Walsh Act implementation. This bill would reauthorize the SOMA program and a related program that helps states and localities verify the residences of registered sex offenders. This bill also would reauthorize fugitive apprehension activities that were authorized under the 2006 Adam Walsh Act.

Nothing can bring back Adam Walsh or the other innocents for whom the 2006 law was passed. But it's important that we continue to honor their memories and also protect America's future children from harm by extending these key Walsh Act programs, which expired about 7 years ago. July 27th will mark the 35th anniversary of Adam Walsh's abduction. I hope that we can secure passage of this important legislation before that date elapses.

The final item on our agenda is S. 2614, Kevin and Avonte's Law. Senators Schumer, Tillis, and I introduced this measure on March 1st to help America's families locate missing loved ones who have Alzheimer's disease, autism or related conditions that may cause them to wander. S. 2614 would extend an existing program designed to assist in locating Alzheimer's disease and dementia patients. It also adds new support for people with autism.

We've named the legislation in honor of two boys with autism who perished because their condition caused them to wander. One of these boys, nine-year-old Kevin Wills, slipped into Iowa's Raccoon River and drowned in 2008. The other, 14-year-old Avonte Oquendo, wandered away from his school and drowned in New York City's East River several years ago.

Theirs are not isolated cases. We've all read or heard the heartbreaking stories of families frantically trying to locate a missing loved one whose condition caused him or her to wander off. We've also seen benefits of notification systems to locate missing children. Our bill promotes similar concepts and technology to help locate people who may be prone to wander away from their families or caregivers due to dementia or a developmental disability.

Because police often are the first to respond when someone goes missing, the bill will make resources available to equip first responders and other community officials with the training necessary to better prevent and respond to these wandering cases. The bill also ensures that grants from the Justice Department can be used by state and local law enforcement agencies and nonprofits for education and training programs to benefit first responders, family members, school personnel, and others. Grant funding may also be used to establish or enhance notification and communications systems for the recovery of missing children with disabilities.

I have numerous letters of support for S. 2613 and S. 2614, and I would like unanimous consent to submit these documents into the record.