

Congressional Record of May 17, 2001

Statement of Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA)

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, the amendment I propose has to do with the adoption tax credit.

The amendment I am speaking about is the renewal and doubling extension and fixing of the adoption tax credit, a tax credit that has been so broadly accepted and enthusiastically supported by many Members of this body.

Just today, in fact, over 300 Members of the House of Representatives voted affirmatively for the Hope for Children tax credit relief. I offer this amendment on behalf of myself and the Senator from Idaho, Mr. Craig. There are a number of other cosponsors. I would like to mention Mrs. Clinton, the Senator from New York, and others who have supported this particular provision.

This amendment would extend the \$5,000 tax credit, doubling it to \$10,000. One of the things we must remember is, if we do not fix this tax credit now, it expires, not next year, not 2 years from now, as some of the other tax measures we are speaking about, but it expires in December of this year. So in 7 months this tax credit that has done so much good for people in this country is set to expire.

The other reason to support it is there is overwhelmingly enthusiastic bipartisan support for it.

The third really good reason is that it is so cost effective. It is such a small amount of money relative to the overall package that I am certain we can find a way, if we find the will to include this in this package.

There were over 125,000 children adopted last year; 15,000 children came to this country from another place in the world. Those places were quite grim. I have been to many of them. Some of these children were taken off hospital floors. Some of these children were found starving. Some of these children were found sick. Some of these children were found with an inability to walk, some could not see, some could not hear. But a family, a mother, a father in this country said: I will take that child, at great expense, and I will raise that child and do something good for the world and do something good for our family and do something wonderful for this child.

There were over 100,000 children who were adopted by American families. Some of these children were healthy. All of these children were beautiful. All children are beautiful and should be loved and cared for and nurtured.

Some of these children have great and special needs. I have seen children who have been adopted who have no limbs, who cannot see. Children have been adopted who have a very short lifespan. But because the heart of people is so great and their generosity so

tremendous, homes and hearts have been opened, families have been built, children have been given hope, and parents who were desperate for children and could not have them have had their dreams come to reality.

The least we can do in this body, as we debate this \$1.35 trillion tax cut, is to add one-third of 1 percent to make this tax credit real, to extend it so it does not just go away, and to double it so it really can help as these expenses rise, and to fix it so it works for children who are being adopted out of foster care.

I know my time is coming to an end. I say in closing, there are today 500,000 children--a half a million children--who have been removed from their homes because of abuse and neglect. There are 100,000 of those 500,000 whose parental rights have been terminated. If we don't work a little harder and a little better to fix our court system, to support our social workers, to give our judges the support they need, and to help where we can--and this is one way to build in our Tax Code an incentive to help some of these children get adopted and to help parents bear the tremendous expenses associated--I think we will be making a grave mistake and missing a wonderful opportunity.

I urge Members of this body to consider this carefully. It doesn't cost a lot. It will bring a great deal of joy and hope and happiness to children and families everywhere. It is something we can do, and as Mr. Gramm, the Senator from Texas, said when we discussed this last year, it really is a shame that this tax cut is scored in a way that costs us, because if you think about it, this is a great savings to the taxpayer, because when children are adopted out of foster care, or when children are adopted who are for some reason not wanted, or their families want them but they cannot raise them so someone else takes that child and raises that child and nurtures that child, I promise you there is \$100,000 or more savings to the taxpayer by the little \$10,000 we give in the credit.

We save hundreds of thousands of dollars because these children do not end up in special education or in the hospital or in jail or in a mental health ward. Why? Because they have parents to love them and care for them. So while the committee has given me a score on my tax credit, I have argued, and I think I could be supported in a court of law, this tax credit is a great savings to this Government. For every child we can get adopted, we don't have to pick up the expenses for them. I think it is what God wants us to do. I am positive it is the right thing to do. I thank my colleagues for giving me this time to offer it. I hope we can find a way to do this.