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MO Senator Roy Blunt's Efforts to Reauthorize Law

JULY 07TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

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*Article Submitted to
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Victims of Child Abuse Act

As a nation, it's our responsibility to protect children, the most vulnerable members of our society.

Despite our best efforts, too many children in Missouri and nationwide still fall victim to abuse, often at the hands of adults they trusted. We must do everything we can to protect our children, and when they are harmed, deliver justice without inadvertently causing any further damage.

More than 20 years ago, Congress passed a landmark law, the "Victims of Child Abuse Act" (VOCAA), to partner with states in the funding of a network of innovative Children's Advocacy Centers – safe and comforting facilities that provide critical tools for our communities to coordinate the investigation, treatment, and prosecution of child abuse cases. Since the law expired in 2005, the Obama Administration has reduced or zeroed out funding for these critical centers in its last three budget requests.

In December 2013, U.S. Senator Chris Coons (Del.) and I introduced a bipartisan bill to reauthorize VOCAA and in June 2014, it passed in the U.S. Senate. I'm now working to urge my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to pass this important legislation so that we can send it to President Barack Obama's desk to be signed into law. Despite ideological differences in many issues facing our nation, we must come together and support this bill.

Children's Advocacy Centers bring everyone together under one roof – law enforcement, prosecutors and child-service professionals –to focus on what's best for the child. By consolidating services, these centers can save taxpayers across the country more than \$1,000 per case in the process.

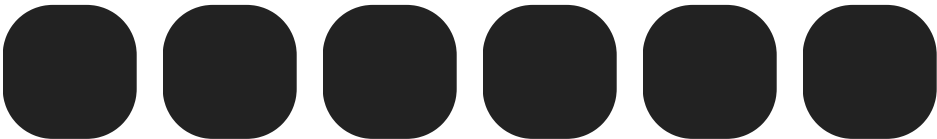
We're fortunate to have 22 Children's Advocacy Centers in Missouri that serve as a safe haven for approximately 7,000 of our state's most vulnerable children each year. In February 2014, I visited several of these centers in Missouri and was very grateful for their commitment to ensuring abused children are given every resource and opportunity they need to overcome their traumatic experience. When I received the Missouri KidsFirst's "Standing with Children" Award in April 2014, I promised I would continue working to make sure this bill becomes law.

We owe it to the victims of child abuse and their families to ensure our Children's Advocacy Centers have the tools they need to treat patients and hold perpetrators accountable. It's time for Congress to put our differences aside and work together to protect our nation's most vulnerable members of society.

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