

## COOPER RECOGNIZES ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH BY INTRODUCING ADOPTION REFORM BILL

Adoption Equality Act would help special needs children find loving homes

WASHINGTON-U.S. Congressman Jim Cooper today recognized Adoption Awareness Month by introducing commonsense adoption reform legislation. The Adoption Equality Act would allow all special needs children in foster care to receive federal adoption assistance payments, opening the door for increased numbers of children to be placed with loving families.

National Adoption Awareness Month and National Adoption Day are celebrated every November to raise awareness of the tens of thousands of children in the U.S. foster care system waiting to be adopted. National Adoption Day fell this year on Saturday, November 17.

"Every child deserves a loving family, but too many children in this country are still waiting for one to adopt them," said Cooper, a longtime advocate of adoption and foster care reform. "Frankly, government should be doing more to help. That's why my colleagues and I introduced the Adoption Equality Act, which will extend assistance payments to families who adopt children with special needs. This is simply about giving kids the opportunity to get a good start in life."

Cooper's bill, H.R. 4091, has already garnered the support of a number of child advocacy organizations, including Pew Charitable Trusts, which joins Congressman Cooper in supporting the Adoption Equality Act and recognizing National Adoption Awareness Month. Hope Cooper, director of the Pew Charitable Trusts' foster care initiative (and no relation to Jim), said: "This month marks the 10-year anniversary of the passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, and there are still over 100,000 children in foster care waiting to be adopted. We believe that there is an urgent need for public policy reforms, such as the Adoption Equality Act, that promote families for all children in foster care."

Congressman Cooper also commends the Tennessee Department of Children's Services for their recent adoption successes. DCS set a new record this federal fiscal year when it finalized the adoptions of 1,217 children. All of these children had been in the custody of the state and now have a home to call their own, providing them much-needed permanency and a good foundation for the future.

"We are making progress, but until every child has a loving family to care for her, there will be work to be done," said Congressman Cooper. "As families across America gather to celebrate the holidays, let's focus on giving each child something to be thankful for."

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National Adoption Day 2007

On National Adoption Day 2007-Saturday, November 17-an unprecedented number of courts and communities across the nation came together to finalize thousands of adoptions of children from foster care and to celebrate all families who adopt. The Day brings together hundreds of judges, attorneys, adoption agencies, adoption professionals, and child advocates who are dedicated to creating forever families for waiting children.

## Goals of National Adoption Day 2007

- Finalize  
adoptions from foster care in all 50 states
  
- Celebrate  
and honor all families who adopt
  
- Raise  
awareness about the 114,000 children in foster care waiting for adoption
  
- Encourage others to adopt children  
from foster care
  
- Build collaboration among local  
adoption agencies, courts, and advocacy organizations
  
- Communicate availability and need  
for post-adoptive services

## History of National Adoption Day

### National

Adoption Day 2007 builds on incredible efforts over the last eight years by The Alliance for Children's Rights through the generous support of the Freddie Mac Foundation, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and others. In November 2000, National Adoption Day sponsors worked with law firms, foster care departments, child advocates, and courts to complete hundreds of foster care adoptions in nine jurisdictions across the country. In just seven years National Adoption Day has truly grown into a national celebration, with 3,300 adoptions finalized in 2006 as part of 250 events in 50 states and the District of Columbia.

## National Adoption Day Sponsors

A coalition of national partners - The Alliance for Children's Rights, Casey Family Services, Children's Action Network, Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and Freddie Mac Foundation- sponsor National Adoption Day to draw special attention to foster children waiting for permanent families and to celebrate all loving families that adopt.