

The logo for ACT 4 Juvenile Justice. It features the word "ACT" in white, bold, sans-serif font on a red rectangular background. To the right of "ACT" is a blue square containing the number "4" in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below this graphic, the words "JUVENILE JUSTICE" are written in a blue, bold, sans-serif font.

SUMMARY

Hearing on "Improving Accountability and Oversight of Juvenile Justice Grants"
United States Senate Judiciary Committee
April 21, 2015

[Senator Chuck Grassley](#) (R-IA) and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) led a hearing of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee yesterday on the oversight and accountability of juvenile justice programs authorized by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). The Act, first passed forty years ago and last reauthorized in 2002, provides guidance and funding to states around building effective juvenile and criminal justice systems that protect kids and promote public safety.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), housed under the Department of Justice, was created by the Act to ensure states comply with the four core requirements of JJDP: (1) the de-institutionalization of status offenders, (2) the removal of youth from adult jails, (3) the sight and sound separation of youth from adults while confined, and (4) addressing the disproportionate minority contact of youth involved in the juvenile justice system. As Mr. Grassley highlighted, "Congress designed [juvenile justice] grants to be earned each year—not to be handed out as entitlements." The hearing explored whether the Justice Department was providing adequate oversight to the administration of this Act.

Witnesses at the hearing articulated the need for more transparency between the federal government and states, attention to updating regulations and guidance for the Act, and delays and inconsistencies in compliance auditing. Furthermore, witnesses testified to the importance of the JJDP in protecting our youth, with some notable excerpts below:

"The power of this law is that it really helps kids," noted Elissa Rumsey, Compliance Monitoring Coordinator at OJJDP and DOJ Whistleblower, DC.

"We need a strong federal presence with adequate funding. Congress should proceed with a fortified reintroduction of JJDP," Professor Dean Hill Rivkin, Distinguished Professor, University of Tennessee College of Law, TN

"The time is ripe to re-authorize the JJDP and in so doing make the changes necessary to improve the accountability and oversight of juvenile justice grants. I do not view this hearing as an obstacle to re-authorization, but an opportunity to improve upon a historic and strategic Act of Congress that has assisted states like mine to do the right thing for youth." Judge Steven Teske, Chief Judge, Clayton County Juvenile Court, GA.

At the hearing, Senator Charles Grassley and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) both reaffirmed their commitment to reintroducing and passing a strengthened Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). The Senators co-sponsored [S. 2999](#)

to reauthorize JJDPa in December, 2014. The bill strengthened the core protections and accountability since the last reauthorization more than 13 years ago.

To watch the hearing or read the testimony, go to [the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee website.](#)