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Bayh, Davis Introduce Legislation to Promote Healthy Families, Active Fatherhood

Washington—With one in three children in the United States living apart from their biological fathers, Senator Evan Bayh (D-IN) and Congressman Danny Davis (D-IL) are renewing their efforts to promote healthy families and support American fathers who are trying to earn a livable wage and take a more active role in the lives of their children.

Bayh today introduced his *Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2009*, a bill cosponsored by then-Senator Barack Obama in the last Congress. Bayh's bill is co-sponsored by Senators Blanche Lincoln (D-AK) and Roland Burris (D-IL).

Davis today introduced companion legislation in the House called the *Julia Carson Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2009*, in honor of Representative Julia Carson, the late Indianapolis congresswoman who championed fatherhood reform throughout her long career.

"It is a sad and sobering fact that one out of every three kids in America will wake up this Father's Day without their father present," Bayh said. "Conceiving a child doesn't make you a man, but raising one responsibly does. Unfortunately, absentee fathers have become a national epidemic. The result is that millions of American children are more likely to struggle in school and have emotional and behavioral problems."

"The absence of fathers or a father figure often contributes to negative behavior in children and disrupts the normal pattern of social and emotional development," Davis said. "In many instances it also limits the child's ability to have necessary economic resources with which to feel secure."

In the last 40 years, the number of children without fathers in America has more than quadrupled, from five million in 1960 to more than 24 million today. Nearly 30 percent of children in fatherless households have not seen their fathers in the past year, and only 40 percent have had contact with their father once or more in the last month.

Studies show that children without fathers in their lives are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime, nine times more likely to drop out of school, and 20 times more likely to end up in prison. They also are more likely to have behavioral problems, to run away from home, and to become teenage parents themselves. The bills offered by Bayh and Davis seek to support fathers trying to do the right thing and take steps to collect child support from non-custodial parents shirking their parental responsibilities.

Bayh added, "Our government spends \$100 billion a year to deal with the fallout of absent fathers. The government can't pass a law to make men good dads, but we can support local programs that specialize in job training, career counseling and financial literacy to help those men who embrace their parental responsibility and are trying to earn a livable wage to do right by their kids. I am glad President Obama is starting a national conversation to draw public attention to the critical role that fathers play in raising responsible, healthy adults."

The legislation offered by Bayh and Davis will:

- Fund job training programs and community partnerships to help parents find employment;
- Fund financial literacy programs and budgeting education, employment services, and mediation and conflict resolution for low-income parents;
- Ensure that child support payments to families do not count as income and result in loss of food stamps;
- Restore cuts in federal child support enforcement funding to help state and local governments collect \$13 billion in additional payments for single parents;
- Require states to send 100 percent of all child support payments to the single parent within five years, rather than letting states take a portion of money for administrative costs;
- Prohibit unfair and unequal treatment of two-parent families receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), ensuring the state work participation standard is the same for all families;
- Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit to increase the incentive for full-time work and fulfillment of child support obligations; and,
- Fund programs designed to protect the families who have been affected by domestic violence.

Senator Bayh and Congressman Davis will attend a White House event today with President Obama to honor America's fathers and urge men to play more active and constructive roles in their children's lives.

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