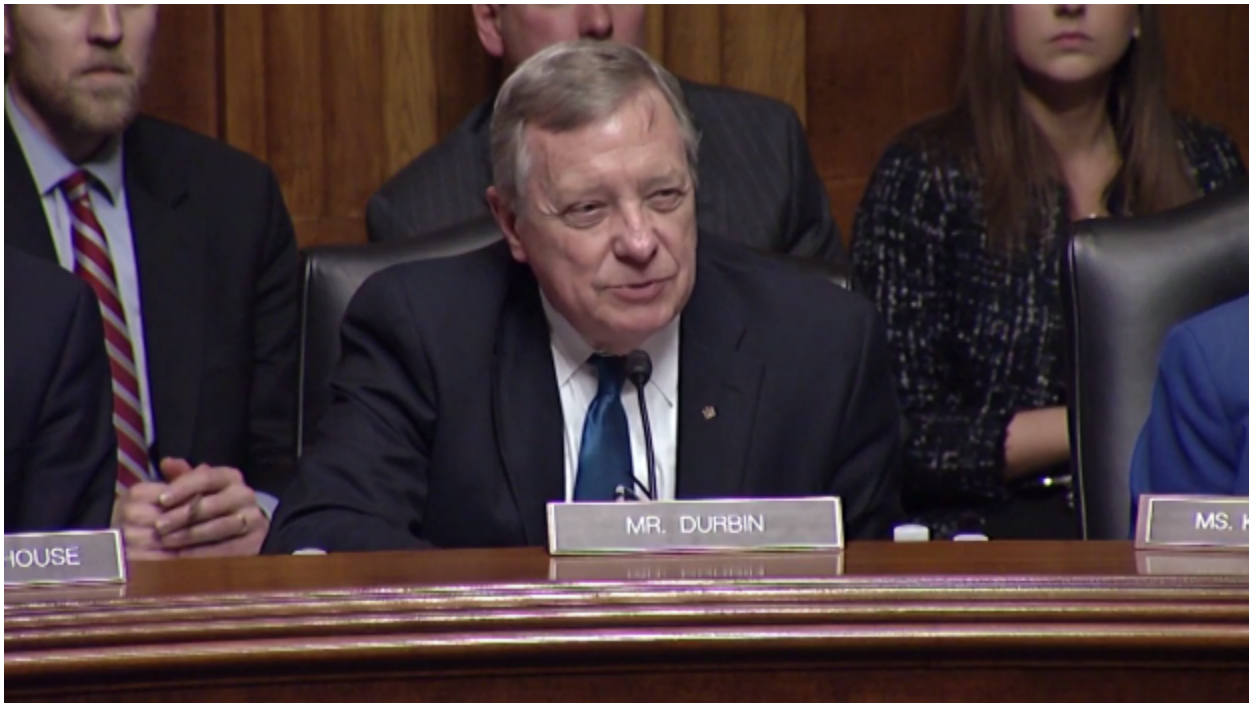


Durbin calls on Trump to comply with order to reunite families separated by 'zero tolerance'

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EAST ST. LOUIS — U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) has called on President Donald Trump to immediately announce his intention to fully comply with a federal district court’s order to return children separated under his Administration’s “zero tolerance” policy to their parents within 30 days, and within 14 days for children under age five, and to regularly update Congress on his progress towards meeting the court’s deadlines.

Durbin’s letter to President Trump follows yesterday’s briefing for Senators Durbin, Cruz, Feinstein, and Tillis by the Trump Administration about the child separation crisis created by President Trump’s “zero tolerance” policy. In the briefing, Administration officials still could not say how many children the Administration has separated from their parents and how many of these children are in government custody.

“The government has a legal and moral obligation to ensure that each of these children can be located by, and promptly reunited with, his or her parents. After yesterday’s briefing, I fear that your Administration is either not up to the task or not acting in good faith to reunite the families it separated,” Durbin wrote. “Your Administration took these children away from their parents. Your Administration must reunite them.”

An official from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) told Durbin yesterday that ICE was preparing to reunite only “about 10” parents in its custody who had been separated from their children under age five within the 14-day time frame specified in the court’s order.

The text of the letter is available here and below:

June 29, 2018

Dear President Trump:

I received a briefing from your Administration about the family separation crisis that your “zero tolerance” policy has created. I was shocked that your representatives still could not say how many children this Administration has separated from their parents and how many of these children are in government custody.

The Administration’s June 23 Fact Sheet states, “The United States government knows the location of all children in its custody” and on Tuesday Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar testified to the Senate Finance Committee that he “within seconds could find any child within our care.” Based on yesterday’s briefing, these statements are simply false.

As you know, the clock is ticking. Earlier this week a federal district court held that the separation of a parent from his or her child “constitutes irreparable harm” and ordered that children separated by your Administration under the “zero tolerance” policy must be returned to their parents within 30 days, and within 14 days for children under age five. However, a representative from the Department of Justice yesterday claimed that this order is one of “multiple conflicting authorities” and would not commit that the Administration will comply with it.

A representative from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) told me yesterday that ICE was preparing to reunite only “about 10” parents in its custody who had been separated from their children under age five within the 14-day time frame specified in the court’s order. There may be dozens or hundreds of children just in this tender age range who were separated from their parents. What does your Administration plan to do with them? Where are their parents?

The government has a legal and moral obligation to ensure that each of these children can be located by, and promptly reunited with, his or her parents. After yesterday's briefing, I fear that your Administration is either not up to the task or not acting in good faith to reunite the families it separated.

Mr. President, I call on you to immediately announce your intention to fully comply with the court's order and to regularly update Congress on your progress towards meeting the court's deadlines.

Your Administration took these children away from their parents. Your Administration must reunite them.

Sincerely,

Sen. Dick Durbin