



Rep. Tom Emmer on Congressman Emmer speaks at Voices for Adoption's National Adoption Month event

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****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** Hi, I'm Congressman Tom Emmer, and I represent Minnesota's 6th Congressional District. I'm grateful for the opportunity to join you today for this wonderful event, and I want to thank Voice for Adoption for putting this together. November is National Adoption Month, and I welcome the occasion to highlight this issue. My wife Jackie and I have been blessed with seven of our own amazing children. Being a parent to each one of them, six boys and one awesome girl, has been our life's greatest gift. Our kids have grown up with something that every child deserves – family permanency. Permanency is the idea that children have a home, either provided by a birth, foster or adoptive parent, where they are welcome and safe to grow, learn and play for their entire childhood. Whether they are formed by birth or by choice, creating a permanent home for a child can irrevocably change their life for the better. I'm proud to serve as a champion for families of all types in the 6th Congressional District and beyond. I think of amazing adoptive parents like the Yeagers, who were selected as the 6th District Angels in Adoption honorees by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. Like many adoptive and foster parents, Marcus and Sarah Yeager moved mountains to make their family whole. In May of 2019, the Yeagers were matched with their daughter, Olivia. They traveled from Minnesota to Nigeria, but once there, experienced enormous bureaucratic delays. After two months in Nigeria, Marcus was forced to make the impossible choice to return to the United States for work. Sarah and Olivia remained in Nigeria for months, where they faced further delay, steep fees and additional adoption expenses. However, just before Thanksgiving of 2019, Sarah and Olivia were finally able to return home. The Yeagers were a family. I tell this story because I understand that there is no difference in the love and commitment shared between adoptive and birth parents and their children. However, the process of becoming a family can be more complicated for adoptive parents. Depending on the age of the children when they are adopted, they can carry trauma from their birth families, the foster system, or simply the pain that comes with lacking a permanent home. For children like these, it is especially important that we prioritize mental health services at every phase of the foster and adoption process. Mental health challenges, while understandable, can complicate the process of pairing a child with their permanent home. The work of creating stable, healthy families must be ongoing and does not end at adoption. By taking part in this event today, you have already demonstrated your commitment to this important effort. I would like to thank all of you, as well as the more than 2,000 adoptive families across our state. Together, you have done the incredible work of creating what every child deserves, a permanent home. Thank you, and God bless.

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