

ever, standardized tests offer frustrating assessments of progress, and dropout rates and graduation rates alike moved in the wrong directions. But, thanks to the hard work and commitment of over 1,000 current students and teachers, in the past few years Central has begun an impressive turnaround that is heartening to us alumni.

I offer my congratulations on this 150th anniversary and every hope that Detroit Central High School will continue to provide excellent education and imbue students with the skills and outlook to seize the day and find success in school and in the years that follow.

TRIBUTE TO JUDGE AVERN COHN

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize a great citizen of Michigan, the Honorable Avern Cohn. Avern has distinguished himself as a leader among leaders in Michigan's legal community and the Michigan community at large. Later this month Avern's synagogue, Congregation Shaarey Zedek, will offer a tribute to him and I am honored to join in recognizing his many accomplishments and contributions to our community life that he has so strengthened and supported.

Professionally, for nearly three decades Judge Cohn has served on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. He currently serves as the Senior Judge, a position he has held for the past nine years. His quick wit and sharp mind have left a lasting impression on the countless attorneys who have argued before him. Throughout his career, Avern's guiding beacon has been justice, and his legacy is one of true independence and impartiality.

Avern's commitment to justice in Michigan has extended well beyond his courtroom. He is a past director of the Detroit Bar Association, a former trustee of the Detroit Bar Foundation, and served as director of the American Judicature Society. Before he was appointed to the court, he led a successful private practice that continues to flourish today. He also served the people of Michigan in an array of positions including as chairperson of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, chairperson of the Detroit Board of Police Commissioners, and as a member of the Michigan Social Welfare Commission.

As a member of the board of trustees of Shaarey Zedek, a former president of the Jewish Welfare Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, and a past vice president of the American Jewish Committee, Avern has used his intellect and drive to the great benefit of our Jewish community. He has also helped bring the focus and resources of these organizations to the fight for the poorest and most vulnerable among us. He is a mensch in the truest sense: his wholehearted dedication to a host of noble causes has marked his character and his life.

I should mention as well that it was Avern's father who introduced my par-

ents to each other. I am proud to call Avern my cousin.

Avern is recognized far and wide as a rarity. All who have known him, who have had the good fortune to work with him, or who have come before him are appreciative of his unique commitment to doing what is right. Many who have never heard his name have benefited and will continue to benefit from his lifetime of good deeds. Barb joins me in offering our thanks and congratulations to Avern. Mazel Tov!

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

SACRAMENTO RIVER CATS TRIPLE-A CHAMPIONSHIP

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am pleased to recognize the 2008 Minor League Triple-A baseball champions, the Sacramento River Cats.

On September 16, 2008, the Sacramento River Cats, of the Pacific Coast League, PCL, defeated the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Yankees, of the International League, 4 to 1 in the Bricktown Showdown to become back-to-back Triple-A champions. Sacramento is the Triple-A affiliate of the Oakland Athletics.

The Sacramento River Cats finished the regular season atop the Pacific Coast League Southern Division with a record of 83 wins and 61 losses. The River Cats were assisted this season by their always faithful fan base, which has led Triple-A in attendance for nine consecutive seasons.

In the opening playoff series between the River Cats and the Salk Lake City Bees, the River Cats excelled by scoring 39 runs en route to a 3-games-to-1 series victory. The series victory demonstrated the River Cats' depth of talent as four starting pitchers, four relief pitchers, two infielders, and one outfielder were called up to the Oakland Athletics before the series began.

In the Pacific Coast League Championship Series, the River Cats defeated the Texas Rangers Triple-A affiliate Oklahoma City Red Hawks, winning the series three games to one to repeat as PCL champions. During this series, the River Cats proved their ability to perform on the road by achieving two of their three victories in Oklahoma. The win also earned the River Cats their fourth Pacific Coast League Championship in the last 6 years.

In the Triple-A championship game, River Cats manager Todd Steversen showcased his talented pitching staff. The River Cats used six pitchers who combined for nine strikeouts while only giving up a single run. The victory gave the Pacific Coast League all three of the Triple-A championships since the Triple-A championship game was reinstated 3 years ago.

As the River Cats' fans, players, and staff gather to celebrate this remarkable accomplishment, I would like to congratulate them on an outstanding season.●

NORTH CAROLINA AZALEA FESTIVAL

• Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I recognize the 62nd North Carolina Azalea Festival, NCAF, which will be held from April 1-5, 2009, in the Greater Wilmington area.

The Azalea Festival is a showcase for Wilmington's rich array of artwork, gardens, history and a testimony to the rich heritage of coastal Carolina. This year's celebration marks the 50th anniversary of the Azalea's Festival's name being changed from the Wilmington Azalea Festival to the North Carolina Azalea Festival.

The NCAF is Wilmington's annual community celebration and the largest festival of its kind in the State. This festival encourages volunteerism and civic participation as it contributes to the region's economy and promotes the unique qualities of Wilmington's river-to-the-sea community.

The festival's concerts, fairs and special events are viewed by more than 1 million people each year, in person and through media coverage. More than 200,000 people are estimated to attend the annual 2-day street fair, while more than 100,000 gather to watch the festival parade.

It takes an extensive volunteer network to run the NCAF. More than 1,000 volunteers are needed to stage over 125 events ranging from concerts to art shows, a street fair with interactive displays, home and garden tours, a parade, special exhibits, a circus, and a variety of other entertainment and events.

The NCAF generates an additional approximate \$5 million to the area's economy and the Southeast Tourism Society selected the NCAF as one of its top 20 events for the second year in a row.

I am pleased to recognize the unique cultural and historical contributions of the 62nd annual North Carolina Azalea Festival.●

RECOGNIZING GULFSTREAM AEROSPACE CORPORATION

• Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I wish to acknowledge an important occasion in the history of Savannah, GA, and the business-aviation industry—the 50th anniversary of Gulfstream flight.

Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation got its start in 1958 when Grumman Aircraft Engineering Company, a company known for military aircraft production, developed the first aircraft specifically designed for business travel.

On August 14, 1958, Grumman test pilots Carl Alber and Fred Rowley took that aircraft—the twin-engine turbo-prop Gulfstream I—on its maiden flight over the company's headquarters in Bethpage, NY. After 800 hours of additional testing, the G-1 received Federal Aviation Administration certification on May 21, 1959.

The G-1 laid the foundation for the future of Gulfstream Aerospace. Five decades after that first flight and more than four decades after moving to Savannah, Gulfstream has manufactured more than 1,800 aircraft. The company's jets have been used to train NASA crew members, transport top Government officials, and support our Armed Forces, making Gulfstream a vital part of America's aerospace industry.

Gulfstream also plays a key role in the city of Savannah, where its workforce has grown from just 100 employees in 1967 to more than 6,000 today, making it the largest manufacturing employer in the city. That workforce is expected to grow even more in years to come thanks to a 7-year, \$400 million-plus Long-Range Facilities Master Plan that includes at least 1,100 new jobs.

I am delighted to recognize the golden anniversary of Gulfstream flight and to congratulate its employees on their many contributions to the community, the country, and the worldwide aviation industry. With the help of its employees, Gulfstream has become a corporate citizen of the highest standard. I commend Gulfstream Aerospace on all their achievements and look forward to their continued success in the city of Savannah and the great State of Georgia.●

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

● Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I would like to take a few moments today to pay tribute to the Employee Benefit Research Institute, or EBRI, on the occasion of its 30th anniversary. EBRI is a well-known, nonpartisan research institution providing invaluable analysis, briefings, and publications on health and retirement issues, which are critically important to both America's workers and the employers that sponsor these benefits. The high-quality and objective work done by EBRI has won it respect within the halls of Congress, among members on both sides of the aisle in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. On EBRI's anniversary, I wish to register my appreciation for its work and my admiration for its commitment to issues relating to employee benefits. I commend EBRI for the valuable contribution the institution has made to policymaking in the all-important areas of retirement, health, and economic security, and wish EBRI continued success in the future.●

BETTENDORF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Bettendorf Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Bettendorf Community School District received a 2001 Harkin construction grant for \$75,000 which it used for a fitness education center and a 2002 Harkin fire life safety grant for \$150,000 which was used for an addition to the high school. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute superintendent Harrison Cass, Jr., former superintendents Marty Lucas and John Perdue, the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Bettendorf Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Barry Anderson, vice president Jeannine Crockett, Paul Castro, Barb Ehrmann, Melinda Duncan Foreman, Betsy Justis, Scott Tinsman and former board members Debbie Roski, Richard Wahlstrand, Dean Arney, Tom Luton, Kathy Weigle, and Steve Mayer.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Bettendorf Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them and wish them a very successful new school year.●

CRESTON COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Creston Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Creston Community School District received a 2002 Harkin grant totaling \$1 million which it used to help with renovations to convert the middle school into an early childhood education center. This project was part of a comprehensive facility plan for the district which included a new K-8 school and an addition to the high school. These schools are the modern, state-of-the-art facilities that befit the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, they are the kind of schools that every child in America deserves. The district also received a 1998 fire safety grant totaling \$60,862 to install fire alarms, improve accessibility, and update electrical systems throughout the district.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Creston Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Bob Deranleau, vice president Stacy Wood, Randy Hughes, Chad Briley, and Brian Strider, and former board members Dr. Bob