

COMMENDING DAVIS COUNTY 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 Davis County 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 Davis County Community School District received a 2003 Harkin grant for \$498,000 to help remodel the north entrance of the high school. The district also received two fire safety grants totaling \$161,000 to make needed repairs to buildings throughout the district. 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 the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Davis County Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the Board of Education—President Marty Owen, Vice President Ken Wuthrich, Edward Reese, Jr., Rob Melvin, Susan Knapp, Rita Grob, and Rob Lynch. I would also like to recognize Superintendent Sam Miller and former Superintendent Anne Morgan.

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 Davis County 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.

COMMENDING INDEPENDENCE 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 Independence 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 Independence Community School District received two Harkin grants totaling \$450,000. A 1999 fire safety grant for \$100,000 was used to install smoke detectors and replace doors at the high school. A 2005 grant totaling \$350,000 was used to help build the Early Childhood Center to provide five classrooms for prekindergarten programs. This school is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, it is the kind of school facility that every child in America deserves.

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 Independence Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education, President Dawnye

Sturtz, Vice President K.C. Robb, Joseph Olsen, Charlie McCardle, and John Christiansen; former board members, Martin Brown, Kevin Greenley, Bob Reiff, and Shelly Whited, as well as elementary principal Dr. Mary Jean Blaisdell and Superintendent Devin Embrey.

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 got to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Independence 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.●

COMMENDING PERRY 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 Perry 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 Perry Community School District received Harkin grants totaling \$505,095 which it used to help build two

additions at the high school to provide additional classrooms and administrative offices and to make fire safety repairs in the middle school. This school is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, it is the kind of school facility that every child in America deserves.

Excellent new schools like Perry High School 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 Perry Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—President Dave Menz, Vice President Kathy Powell, Dan Wilhelmi, Derek Vankirk, Scott Seeley, board secretary Nancy Gee and board treasurer Dwayne Hochhalter and former board members—Gary Huitt, Kent Feiedrichsen, Larry Lyons, Rudy Zagar, board secretary Mary Boege, Chuck Painter, Shirley Keenan-Allyn and board secretary Dean Stumbo. I would also like to recognize Superintendent Randall McCaulley, former Superintendent Ellen Wrzeski, high school principal Dan Marburger and the Kids 2000 Committee.

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 Perry 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.●

REMEMBERING WALTER C. "BUD" O'MEARA

• Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I honor today the memory of Walter C. "Bud" O'Meara, a teacher, coach, and good friend who passed away on August 3, 2008. I am deeply saddened by Walter's death and will keep his friends and family in my thoughts during this difficult time.

Growing up in my hometown of Stamford, CT, Walter spent most of his

free time at the local YMCA, where he developed a passion for sports. While attending Stamford High School—SHA—in the 1930s, Walter was captain of the basketball team and an all state quarterback. His abilities on the football field earned him a scholarship to Notre Dame, the most storied program in the history of college football, where he played under Coach Elmer Layden, one of the Four Horsemen.

After graduating from Notre Dame, Walter joined the U.S. Navy, where he would become a lieutenant in the Naval Air Corps. While in the Navy, Walter married his wife, Grace, whom he had met on a blind date. They would remain married until Grace's death in 2005. As a member of Air Group 19, Walter flew bombers in the Pacific Combat Zone during the Second World War and was awarded the Air Medal for his service. Walter would keep in touch with his friends from Air Group 19 throughout his life.

After the war, Walter returned to SHS as a teacher and coach. In 1958, he was named head football coach, and proceeded to lead Stamford High to back-to-back State championships in 1958 and 1959. In addition to his duties as football coach, Walter also coached American Legion Baseball for 9 years. Again, Walter proved adept at getting the most out of his athletes, producing five State championship teams, and two regional champions.

While his teams' accomplishments on the field are certainly impressive, Coach O'Meara's greatest contribution to Stamford High was the constant source of friendship and support he provided his students. Years later, his players still fondly recall the influence he had on them not just on the playing field but in life as well. When I attended SHS, all students, whether athletes or not, knew that Coach O'Meara was someone they could approach whenever they needed assistance.

When he retired from coaching, Walter continued to serve as an administrator at SHS and managed the Roxbury Swimming and Tennis Club for over 25 years. He also worked as a professional football scout for 9 years.

However busy Walter was, he always made time for his family and friends. Those who knew him best said that no matter his professional success, his greatest pride was reserved for his 6 daughters, 11 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

While I will miss my good friend Walter O'Meara, I take solace that his example will live on in all of us who were lucky to have known him.●

CELEBRATING THE 30TH ANNUAL DICK LUGAR FITNESS FESTIVAL

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I appreciate this opportunity to share my gratitude for the remarkable work of the students and staff at Indianapolis's Butler University over our 30-year partnership in encouraging fitness and health awareness in central Indiana.

This Saturday, September 13, 2008, I will have the privilege of joining my friends and fellow Hoosiers at the 30th Annual Dick Lugar Community Walk, Run and Health Fair, held on the attractive grounds of Butler University. This festival was inaugurated in May of 1979 in order to highlight the positive benefits of fitness and nutrition to members of the local community. From the very beginning, this initiative was designed to appeal to a wide spectrum of people. Youth and families were encouraged to participate in an effort to reach out beyond the normal universe of running enthusiasts and to capitalize on those who could serve as a model for young people. With the inclusion of the health fair our partnership strove to engage older adults as well. And in 1983, the festivities began to include a Health and Fitness Award, given in recognition of individuals and organizations that have made exemplary contributions to the community in these important areas.

The Fitness Festival remains an event I look forward to with excitement each year. The running and race-walk competitions, the health fair with local experts and organizations in attendance, and the general fellowship all promise to be especially memorable in this signal year. Accordingly, I would like to take special care in highlighting those most responsible for the festival's perennial success.

Butler University and its dedicated president, Dr. Bobby Fong, deserve considerable praise. The university's eagerness to not only host, but embrace this opportunity to promote the benefits of a fit and healthy lifestyle reminds me of why Hoosiers are so proud of our colleges and universities' roles in improving the quality of life for individuals throughout Indiana. Thanks must also be given to the Butler students and faculty, and the community members who volunteer as organizers and race workers; the individuals who devote their experience and expertise at the health fair booths; the city of Indianapolis and Marion County for logistical support; other supporting organizations, whose generosity and commitment to health awareness in the Indianapolis community is highly commendable; and the thousands of individuals who have participated in the Fitness Festival over the course of its life.

It is important that as citizens we do what we can at the Federal, State, and community levels to promote the benefits of leading healthy lifestyles. This auspicious occasion provides a wonderful opportunity to commend Butler University for its efforts in this regard.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MISSOURI SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Mrs. McCASKILL. Mr. President, today I would like to honor the important and national contributions of the Missouri School of Journalism in Columbia, MO, on its 100th anniversary.