

funding for Head Start, school construction, and dialysis center projects worth more than \$1 million, helping to create jobs and expand economic opportunities.

School grants: Every child in Iowa deserves to be educated in a classroom that is safe, accessible, and modern. That is why, for the past decade and a half, I have secured funding for the innovative Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program—better known among educators in Iowa as Harkin grants—for public schools construction and renovation. Across 15 years, Harkin grants worth more than \$132 million have helped school districts to fund a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools. In many cases, these Federal dollars have served as the needed incentive to leverage local public and private dollars, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect within a school district. Over the years, Plymouth County has received \$462,349 in Harkin Grants.

Agricultural and rural development: Because I grew up in a small town in rural Iowa, I have always been a loyal friend and fierce advocate for family farmers and rural communities. I have been a member of the House or Senate Agriculture Committee for 40 years—including more than 10 years as chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Across the decades, I have championed farm policies for Iowans that include effective farm income protection and commodity programs; strong, progressive conservation assistance for agricultural producers; renewable energy opportunities; and robust economic development in our rural communities. Since 1991, through various programs authorized through the farm bill, Plymouth County has received more than \$3.4 million from a variety of farm bill programs.

Keeping Iowa communities safe: I also firmly believe that our first responders need to be appropriately trained and equipped, able to respond to both local emergencies and to statewide challenges such as, for instance, the methamphetamine epidemic. Since 2001, Plymouth County's fire departments have received over \$325,229 for firefighter safety and operations equipment.

Disability rights: Growing up, I loved and admired my brother Frank, who was deaf. But I was deeply disturbed by the discrimination and obstacles he faced every day. That is why I have always been a passionate advocate for full equality for people with disabilities. As the primary author of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA, and the ADA Amendments Act, I have had four guiding goals for our fellow citizens with disabilities: equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. Nearly a quarter century since passage of the ADA, I see remarkable changes in communities everywhere I go in

Iowa—not just in curb cuts or closed captioned television but in the full participation of people with disabilities in our society and economy, folks who at long last have the opportunity to contribute their talents and to be fully included. These changes have increased economic opportunities for all citizens of Plymouth County, both those with and without disabilities, and they make us proud to be a part of a community and country that respects the worth and civil rights of all of our citizens.

This is at least a partial accounting of my work on behalf of Iowa, and specifically Plymouth County, during my time in Congress. In every case, this work has been about partnerships, co-operation, and empowering folks at the State and local level, including in Plymouth County, to fulfill their own dreams and initiatives. And, of course, this work is never complete. Even after I retire from the Senate, I have no intention of retiring from the fight for a better, fairer, richer Iowa. I will always be profoundly grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of Iowa as their Senator.●

LYON COUNTY, IOWA

● **Mr. HARKIN.** Mr. President, the strength of my State of Iowa lies in its vibrant local communities, where citizens come together to foster economic development, make smart investments to expand opportunity, and take the initiative to improve the health and well-being of residents. Over the decades, I have witnessed the growth and revitalization of so many communities across my State. It has been deeply gratifying to see how my work in Congress has supported these local efforts.

I have always believed in accountability for public officials, and this, my final year in the Senate, is an appropriate time to give an accounting of my work across four decades representing Iowa in Congress. I take pride in accomplishments that have been national in scope—for instance, passing the Americans with Disabilities Act and spearheading successful farm bills. But I take a very special pride in projects that have made a big difference in local communities across my State.

Today, I would like to give an accounting of my work with leaders and residents of Lyon County to build a legacy of a stronger local economy, better schools and educational opportunities, and a healthier, safer community.

Between 2001 and 2013, the creative leadership in your community has worked with me to secure funding in Lyon County worth over \$1.2 million and successfully acquired financial assistance from programs I have fought hard to support, which have provided more than \$6.2 million to the local economy.

Of course my favorite memory of working together has to be our shared

commitment to school construction and modernization. Iowa students cannot learn in buildings that are falling apart. Working together with State and local communities, this funding has ensured Iowa students are learning in schools that are safe and modern. It was an investment in Iowa communities and its kids, and I look forward to learning about the renovations made possible in Lyon County.

Among the highlights:

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Keeping Iowa communities safe: I also firmly believe that our first responders need to be appropriately trained and equipped, able to respond to both local emergencies and to statewide challenges such as, for instance, the methamphetamine epidemic. Since 2001, Lyon County's fire departments have received over \$397,392 for firefighter safety and operations equipment.

Wellness and health care: Improving the health and wellness of all Americans has been something I have been passionate about for decades. That is why I fought to dramatically increase funding for disease prevention, innovative medical research, and a whole

range of initiatives to improve the health of individuals and families not only at the doctor's office but also in our communities, schools, and workplaces. I am so proud that Americans have better access to clinical preventive services, nutritious food, smoke-free environments, safe places to engage in physical activity, and information to make healthy decisions for themselves and their families. These efforts not only save lives, they will also save money for generations to come thanks to the prevention of costly chronic diseases, which account for a whopping 75 percent of annual health care costs. I am pleased that Lyon County has recognized this important issue by securing \$63,750 for wellness grants.

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RECOGNIZING BULLET TOOLS

● Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, thousands of American businesses stem from simple ideas that are born in the living rooms, backyards, and garages of ambitious entrepreneurs. From humble beginnings, businesses mature to reach new customers and broader regions. I wish to recognize Bullet Tools, a small family owned business from my home

State of Idaho, whose originality and hard work grew into a global success in a distinctive market.

In 1998, Bullet Tools started as a family operated assembly line in Dalen and Mary Gunn's double-wide mobile home in Hayden, ID. The words, "It can't be done," fueled Mr. Gunn's determination to work through any obstacle. Seeking to advance the construction industry, Mr. Gunn discovered an enhanced method of installing flooring without the challenges associated with electricity, dust and constantly moving in and out of buildings.

Today, Bullet Tools is recognized as a world leading expert in fixed-blade cutting tools for the construction industry. The company has earned a worldwide reputation and serves an international market with unique custom installation needs. Fifty percent of its sales are exported to markets abroad, including Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, Russia and the United Kingdom with an expectation for further growth in other international markets.

Bullet Tools has grown more than 300 percent over the past 5 years. In 2012, Dalen and Mary Gunn's son-in-law, Ben Toews, became president of the company. Mr. Toews' business expertise has allowed Bullet Tools to streamline its product lines and build upon existing manufacturing relationships, while Mr. Gunn continues to focus his energy on researching and developing new products. Today, Bullet Tools boasts over 70 products that may be found both in store and online at Home Depot and other retail distributors across the globe.

Last week, I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Gunn and Mr. Toews at their facility in Hayden, ID, with my colleague on the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, chair MARIA CANTWELL. I was impressed by the company's strong commitment to its 25 employees and the greater Idaho community. Because of the team's dedication and the business's achievements, it is not surprising that the company has received various awards and endorsements. For example, Bullet Tools was selected as the recipient of the U.S. Small Business Administration's 2009 Northwest Small Business Administration Exporter of the Year Award, the 2010 Green Products Award by Building Products Magazine, the 2013 Pro Tool Innovation Award, and the Gold Hammer Award from Carpenter Magazine. In 2013, Ben Toews was individually recognized as one of North Idaho Business Journal's 30 Under 40 for his ongoing commitment to excellence as an executive setting the pace for outstanding achievement through his integrity and character.

Today, the Gunn's original mobile home continues to welcome visitors to the Bullet Tools' corporate office and manufacturing location, reminding us that with hard work and dedication, the American dream may be achieved in our own backyard. I congratulate

the Gunn family and everyone at Bullet Tools on their continued prosperity, strong work ethic, and outstanding reputation for excellence. Bullet Tools epitomizes the finest characteristics of American innovation and is a tribute to both Idaho and the Nation.●

TRIBUTE TO STEPHANIE GRUBA

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Stephanie Gruba, a legislative aide in my Washington, DC, office, for the years of hard work she has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota.

Stephanie is a native of Milbank, SD, and is a graduate from the University of South Dakota. Upon graduation from USD, Stephanie moved from Vermillion, SD, to Washington, DC, to become a member of my office staff. In her almost 3 years on my staff, Stephanie has served as a staff assistant, legislative correspondent, and as a legislative aide. Stephanie has worked tirelessly for my South Dakota constituents and as a loyal member of "Team Thune."

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Stephanie for her dedicated service in the Senate and wish her continued success in the years to come.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 2:36 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 4486. An act making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 4486. An act making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and