

charter schools with greater flexibility in how they use Federal startup grants, for example, by allowing them to use the funds for transportation or for facilities improvements if that is what they decide is the best use of funds.

Finally, this legislation would encourage States to provide charter schools with the support they need to be successful and to hold them accountable when they fail to demonstrate positive results.

Last summer, Senator RAND PAUL and I sat in a room with the parents who had been able to get their child into a charter school in Nashville, where 600 students were left on the waiting list.

It was an emotional experience to hear these parents talk about their child getting this opportunity, to hear the students talk about how well they are doing, and to hear from the teachers who spend their lives helping these students.

Charter schools are public schools stripped of many Federal, State and union rules and constraints placed on traditional public schools. The money the State government would ordinarily spend on their district school follows each child to the charter school instead.

Charter schools cannot charge tuition, and any student who wants to attend a charter school may do so if space is available.

If more students want to attend than can be accommodated, the charter school must use a lottery to decide which students receive a seat.

Several years ago I visited the Memphis Academy of Science and Engineering, a charter school in Memphis. While most Memphis students were on spring break at the time, the sophomores I visited were in the classroom studying Advanced Placement biology.

Because the school's teachers have the flexibility to do what is best for their students, the school was open 12 hours a day and on Saturday mornings because many of these children did not have as much at home as others. And these children, who the year before had been at schools deemed "low-performing," were succeeding.

These students were fortunate because their parents had the opportunity to choose this charter school, and their children were lucky enough to win a seat.

Across Tennessee, more than 15,000 students now have that same opportunity to attend one of 68 charter schools—and they are thriving as a result.

A recent study by Stanford University found that, on average, Tennessee students attending charter schools gain the equivalent of 86 additional days of instruction in reading and 72 additional days of instruction in math each year than do students attending district schools.

In other words, they make almost a year-and-a-half's worth of progress in a single school year.

About 60 percent of students attending charter schools in Tennessee are low-income, more than 90 percent are African American or Hispanic.

In other words, charter schools in Tennessee are making a difference for those students who have traditionally been least well served by our Nation's public schools.

We have come a long way since 1992, when, in my last act as U.S. Education Secretary under George H.W. Bush, I sent a letter to every school superintendent across the country, urging them to consider replicating the early successes of charter schools in Minnesota—which were then called "start-from-scratch schools."

At the time, there were only a dozen charter schools in existence. Today, there are well over 6,000, serving over 2.5 million students. Nearly 5 percent of all public schools students in the United States now attend charters.

Most important—the fact that should give great urgency to our effort here today—there are an estimated 580,000 students on waiting lists for charter schools throughout the Nation.

That is because parents and students see that charter schools are working.

RECOGNIZING THE FRANKLIN REGIONAL COMMUNITY

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the heroic acts of students and teachers during the crisis at Franklin Regional High School in Murrysville, PA. The entire community displayed astounding courage in the face of tragedy.

On the morning of April 9, 2014, a knife-wielding student assaulted students and teachers at Franklin Regional High School. During the attack, 24 people were injured, some gravely. However, thanks to the selfless actions of students, faculty, and support staff, the attacker was subdued and additional harm was prevented.

Students shielded friends from danger and administered emergency first aid, an attentive student had the composure to sound the fire alarm to warn people to exit the building, and several brave individuals put their safety on the line to incapacitate the attacker. At a time of crisis, the Franklin Regional family proved their commitment to one another.

I also want to acknowledge the brave actions of law enforcement and emergency personnel whose quick arrival ensured the safety of our students. Their prompt arrival provided life-saving medical attention to injured students and the community remains indebted to their vigilance.

I believe that the Senate should recognize the Franklin Regional community for their bravery and resiliency. It is imperative that the community knows that our country shares their grief and stands with them as they overcome this tragedy.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING ADAM BOYD

• Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Adam Boyd for his hard work as an intern in my Washington, DC, office. I recognize his efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Adam is a native of Cheyenne, WY, and a graduate of Cheyenne East High School. He is also a recent graduate of the University of Wyoming, where he earned a degree in French. He has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made him an invaluable asset to our office. The quality of his work is reflected in his great efforts during his time in my office.

I thank Adam for the dedication he has shown while working for me and my staff. It was a pleasure to have him as part of our team. I know he will have continued success with all of his future endeavors. I wish him all my best on his next journey.●

RECOGNIZING MARTHA CROSBY

• Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Martha Crosby for her hard work as an intern in my Washington, DC, office. I recognize her efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Martha is from Richmond, VA. She is a recent graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, where she earned a degree in political science, concentration in politics and government. She has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made her an invaluable asset to our office. The quality of her work is reflected in her great efforts over the last few months.

I thank Martha for the dedication she has shown while working for me and my staff. It was a pleasure to have her as part of our team. I know she will have continued success with all of her future endeavors. I wish her all my best on her next journey.●

RECOGNIZING PATTERSON OAKS

• Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Patterson Oaks for her hard work as an intern in my Casper, WY, office. I recognize her efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Patterson is a native of Casper, WY where she graduated from Natrona County High School. She attends Casper College where she is pursuing a degree in paralegal studies. She has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made her an invaluable asset to our office. The quality of her work is reflected in her great efforts over the last several months.

I thank Patterson for the dedication she has shown while working for me

and my staff. It was a pleasure to have her as part of our team. I know she will have continued success with all of her future endeavors. I wish her all my best on her next journey.●

RECOGNIZING MICKALA SCHMIDT

● Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Mickala Schmidt for her hard work as an intern in my Casper, WY, office. I recognize her efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Mickala is a native of Casper, WY where she graduated from Natrona County High School. She attends Casper College where she is pursuing a degree in international studies and education. She has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made her an invaluable asset to our office. The quality of her work is reflected in her great efforts over the last several months.

I thank Mickala for the dedication she has shown while working for me and my staff. It was a pleasure to have her as part of our team. I know she will have continued success with all of her future endeavors. I wish her all my best on her next journey.●

RECOGNIZING EMILY SMITHSON

● Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Emily Smithson for her hard work as an intern in my Washington, DC, office. I recognize her efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Emily is from San Marcos, CA. She is a recent graduate of Brigham Young University-Hawaii, where she earned a degree in political science and history. She has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made her an invaluable asset to our office. The quality of her work is reflected in her great efforts during her time in my office.

I thank Emily for the dedication she has shown while working for me and my staff. It was a pleasure to have her as part of our team. I know she will have continued success with all of her future endeavors. I wish her all my best on her next journey.●

RECOGNIZING MATTHEW SPENNY

● Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Matthew Spenny for his hard work as an intern in my Washington, DC, office. I recognize his efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Matthew is from Laramie, WY, and is a graduate of the University of Wyoming, where he earned a degree in communication and journalism. He has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made him an invaluable

asset to our office. The quality of his work is reflected in his great efforts over the last several months.

I thank Matthew for the dedication he has shown while working for me and my staff. It was a pleasure to have him as part of our team. I know he will have continued success with all of his future endeavors. I wish him all my best on his next journey.●

HARDIN 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. And 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 Hardin 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 Hardin County worth over \$2.3 million and successfully acquired financial assistance from programs I have fought hard to support, which have provided more than \$10 million to the local economy.

Of course my favorite memory of working together has to be our shared commitment to school construction, renovation, and fire safety through the Harkin grant program. Working together with state and local communities, this funding has ensured Iowa students are learning in schools that are safe, and modern. I look forward to learning about the renovations made possible in Hardin County.

Among the highlights:

Investing in Iowa's economic development through targeted community projects: In Northern Iowa, we have worked together to grow the economy by making targeted investments in important economic development projects including improved roads and bridges, modernized sewer and water systems, and better housing options for resi-

dents of Hardin County. In many cases, I have secured Federal funding that has leveraged local investments and served as a catalyst for a whole ripple effect of positive, creative changes. For example, working with mayors, city council members, and local economic development officials in Hardin County, I have fought for funding for the Iowa National Guard Readiness Center in Iowa Falls worth \$2 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's 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, Hardin County has received \$396,191 in Harkin grants. Similarly, schools in Hardin County have received funds that I designated for Iowa Star Schools for technology totaling \$73,350.

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, Hardin County has received more than \$6.6 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, Hardin County's fire departments have received over \$1.3 million 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