

I hope you will keep in touch with us in the days to come with news of your next great adventure in life. Thank you for your service to our country, thank you for your focus on making Arkansas and our nation better places to live, and, most of all, thank you for your friendship. Good luck in all your future endeavors. God bless.

TIM JOHNSON

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I rise today to honor my friend and colleague from South Dakota, Senator TIM JOHNSON, who is retiring at end of this year. TIM has an impressively long career in public service, representing his home State of South Dakota in Congress for the last 28 years.

TIM is often described as “a work horse, not a show horse,” and with good reason. His values, passion and work ethic are reflected in the projects he has championed and the constituent services he has provided for the people of South Dakota. Following his AVM in 2006, Senator JOHNSON came into the national spotlight which he so seldom sought. All were inspired by his perseverance and dedication to the people of South Dakota to return to do the work he loves, and the Senate has been better for it.

As a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, TIM championed important water projects to bring clean drinking water to rural communities and Indian reservations, pressed for the development of renewable fuels, and supported efforts to build vital infrastructure throughout rural America. Through his position on the Appropriations Committee, he fought to see these efforts through from planning to completion.

Farmers and ranchers throughout his State could count on TIM to be a strong voice for agriculture, advancing their priorities in numerous farm bills. His leadership on country of origin labeling, COOL, laid important groundwork to support our Nation's producers and ensure consumers know where their food comes from—a fight that continues today.

TIM has also been a champion for veterans, working to improve the benefits they are owed and connecting South Dakota veterans with support and services in their communities. He was able to secure advanced appropriations for the Veterans Administration, providing budget certainty and ensuring access to health care for those who have so bravely served their country.

TIM has a strong relationship with the tribes in South Dakota and is considered a steadfast and valued friend in Indian Country. He has tirelessly pressed for the Federal Government to meet its treaty and trust responsibilities. While significant challenges remain, TIM JOHNSON's legacy as an advocate for Native American issues has improved the quality of life on many reservations. This commitment will be missed both in the Senate and on the Indian Affairs Committee.

Senator JOHNSON brought his passion for rural and Native American issues to

the Senate Banking Committee. Under his chairmanship, the work of the committee highlighted the often-overlooked needs in these communities—and he was a champion during our efforts on housing finance reform to make sure they could receive the resources they so desperately need. Strengthening small community banks, improving housing, and reauthorizing critical highway and transit programs are just a few of the initiatives Chairman JOHNSON undertook, and it was a pleasure working under his leadership.

Throughout all of these accomplishments, accolades, and challenges, TIM has remained true to his roots. He has never taken his public service for granted and has always considered it a privilege to serve the people of South Dakota. The impact of his work during his time in Congress will be seen in communities throughout his State for years to come, and he has certainly left his mark on South Dakota politics. I wish him the very best as he and his wife Barbara embark on this new chapter and get to enjoy more time with their family back in South Dakota.

MIKE JOHANNIS

Mr. President, I also wish to honor my colleague from Nebraska, Senator MIKE JOHANNIS, who is retiring from the Senate at the end of this year. Senator JOHANNIS has been a friend since I started in the Senate, and I appreciate his willingness to work with me towards our shared goals. He is one of only two current Senators to have served as a Governor and cabinet Secretary, providing him with a tremendous amount of wisdom on how to get things done. It is his incredible knowledge and strong Midwestern work ethic that I admire most about him.

For more than 30 years, Senator JOHANNIS has been a strong voice for the people of Nebraska. His first act in public service was in 1983 as a County Board member in Lancaster County. He later went on to serve as both Councilman and Mayor of Lincoln. He would eventually become Governor of Nebraska and Secretary of Agriculture under President George W. Bush. Senator JOHANNIS set no limits to his potential; readily serving in any capacity he could to make our great Nation a better place.

Senator JOHANNIS and I serve together on the Agriculture Committee and I greatly admired the thoughtfulness and expertise he brought to the negotiations on the Farm Bill. His knowledge as a former Agriculture Secretary was unmatched and ensured many improvements were made throughout the debate. Senator JOHANNIS never forgot about our farmers and always kept his eye on providing them with the best possible outcome he could.

We also had the privilege of working together on the Banking and Housing Committee. He and I worked together with a bipartisan group of committee members to draft and advance legislation reforming the housing finance sys-

tem to protect the American taxpayer from another bailout and to guarantee that another housing crisis does not happen again. Once again, his voice on behalf of rural America during these talks was critical and something that I greatly appreciated.

Senator JOHANNIS has never been about taking credit or seeking the spotlight. He maintained a strong, hard work ethic throughout his time in the Senate and was one who was willing to cross the aisle to get things done. The American people expect that of their representatives, and Senator JOHANNIS met those expectations on behalf of Nebraska.

I will miss having him as my colleague in the Senate, but I also know that his wife and family will enjoy the free time they will have with him. I wish him happiness and success in the next chapter of his life.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL GAMEL-McCORMICK

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, as I approach the end of my Senate career, I cannot help but reflect on the role that my tremendous staff members have played in advancing my policy goals and, indeed, advancing the important work the American people over the years. I have been blessed to have worked with truly remarkable individuals who have worked tirelessly to promote initiatives that will improve the lives of ordinary Americans.

Among my own legislative and policy priorities over the years, none has been greater for me than advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. I am proud and honored to have been the chief Senate sponsor of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the last of the great civil rights laws of the 20th century—one that has correctly been called the Emancipation Proclamation for persons with disabilities. That legislation sought, once and for all, to fully enfranchise people with disabilities and to fully integrate them into the fabric of American life, guided by four great principles—equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic sufficiency. Over the last quarter century, that legislation has resulted in a quantum leap forward in the civil rights and daily quality of life of millions of Americans with disabilities.

However, even with that quantum leap forward, much work remains to be done to advance the rights of people with disabilities both in the United States and around the world. And over the last several years, no one has worked harder to advance this unfinished agenda of disabilities rights than Michael Gamel-McCormick, who served on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee as my lead K-12 staffer through the markup of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and subsequently as a team leader on disability policy.

Throughout his career, Michael has worked to improve the lives of children

and other people with disabilities. He came to the HELP Committee from the University of Delaware, where he was dean of the College of Education and Human Development and where he had previously served as a departmental chair and director of the Center for Disability Studies. Prior to that, Michael served, variously, as director of an early intervention program in West Virginia, director of children's services at an urban community services agency, and as a preschool and kindergarten teacher. Michael also consulted worldwide in helping other countries to establish their own systems to support persons with disabilities and to expand early learning opportunities.

Michael's deep experience and knowledge was evident as soon as he arrived at the HELP Committee. Immediately, Michael became an integral and trusted member of my staff. His initial work on the committee was as an education policy advisor, lead staffer on K–12 education, and an expert on the intersection of education and inequality. His expertise and leadership were critical in crafting and passing in committee the Strengthening America's Schools Act. As an education policy adviser, Michael was also deeply involved in shaping policies to strengthen the education of children with disabilities.

After serving as a senior education advisor, Michael assumed the role of my chief disability policy advisor, spearheading a number of important initiatives, including two important committee reports on persons with disabilities. The first report, on the continued use of seclusions and restraints in our schools, exposed the inappropriate and often dangerous use of physical restraints on and unsupervised exclusion of many children, especially children with disabilities, in U.S. schools. That report was accompanied by important legislation to finally prohibit these outdated and ineffective measures. The second report, "Fulfilling the Promise: Overcoming Persistent Barriers to Economic Self-Sufficiency for People with Disabilities," investigated the barriers that people with disabilities face as they seek to rise out of poverty and enter the middle class. This report found that living with a disability is both economically and socially costly, and that significant barriers—especially logistical barriers and discrimination—continue to stand in the way of the economic security of people with disabilities. Specifically, the report said this:

Twenty-four years ago, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act. We have been successful at meeting many of the goals of the ADA. We have increased the accessibility of our buildings, our streets, even our parks, beaches and recreation areas. And we've made our books and TVs, telephones and computers more accessible as well. And for many Americans with disabilities, our workplaces have become more accessible as well.

But far too few people with disabilities are in the workforce! The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is 12.8 percent,

more than double the six percent unemployment rate for people without disabilities. Of the almost 29 million people with disabilities over 16 years of age, less than 20 percent participate in the workforce compared with nearly 70 percent of those without a disability.

Not content to identify a problem, Michael also seeks to solve them. His most enduring legacy as my disability policy director will be his work to promote the employment of persons with disabilities through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which was signed into law earlier this year. That law will ensure that young people with disabilities get the experiences they need to succeed in work settings. To obtain those experiences, the bill requires State vocational rehabilitation programs to work hand-in-hand with local secondary schools. The bill also ensures that employers will have the information necessary to recruit, hire, and retain people with disabilities.

These efforts will directly address the high unemployment rate among people with disabilities, smooth the transition of young people with disabilities into the competitive integrated workforce, and help employers to support their employees with disabilities. I am especially proud of these provisions. And I am very grateful to Michael, who successfully endeavored to enact them in the face of long odds.

I had the good fortune to travel with Michael to China earlier this year, where we sought to identify opportunities for international cooperation on disability policy and to work with the Chinese Government to strengthen its own policies and programs to assist and empower the millions persons with disabilities in that country. On the trip, not only was Michael incredibly helpful and knowledgeable, but he also proved to be a good humored and indefatigable travel partner.

Last and certainly not least, I want to salute Michael's heroic efforts over the past year to advance the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The CRPD, as it is known in shorthand, is a United Nation's treaty modeled after our own Americans with Disabilities Act, with a goal of exporting the same advances enjoyed by persons with disabilities in the United States to countries around the world. The United States has always been a city on a hill when it comes to disability policy, and the CRPD offers an opportunity for us to play a more robust leadership role in advancing disability rights across the globe. Unfortunately, despite broad support for the CRPD among business leaders, faith leaders, and in the disability policy community, the CRPD ran up against significant and, I might add, spurious opposition here in the Senate. In fact, after failing to be ratified in the 112th Congress, the treaty was all but declared dead.

However, at my urging and direction, Michael worked tirelessly to revive the moribund treaty, reaching out to Re-

publicans, enlisting the assistance of business interests and activating grassroots networks around the country in support of the treaty. At the end of the day, the Senate was still not able to overcome the misinformed objections of a number of Senators who blocked consideration of the treaty. But Michael's efforts to resurrect and advance the treaty in the face of daunting odds were remarkable. Thanks to Michael's work, we came closer than ever before to passing the CRPD. I certainly haven't given up the fight to pass the CRPD, and I am grateful to Michael for all that he did to advance the cause of global disability rights.

It is no exaggeration to say that Michael has enriched the lives of countless individuals. Because of his work, young children have been exposed to the rich environments that they need for early learning. Because of his work, young people with disabilities will receive the supports and experiences they need to secure gainful employment. Because of his work, school-aged children will receive developmentally appropriate discipline and direction rather than the cruelty of seclusion and physical restraints. And because of his work, countless individuals with disabilities will work, live, laugh, and flourish in their communities alongside friends, colleagues, and neighbors.

This is a living legacy that Michael Gamel-McCormick deserves to be very proud of. I am deeply grateful for his service to the committee, to the American people, and to me personally. And I wish him great success in his future endeavors on behalf of people with disabilities here in America and across the globe.

TRIBUTE TO BETH STEIN

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in 1997, Beth Stein, a talented young woman armed with a razor-sharp mind and relentless attention to detail, arrived on Capitol Hill as counsel to a true American hero, U.S. Senator John Glenn. As his investigative counsel, Beth played a key role in the inquiry into campaign finance abuses in the 1996 election. And she helped to lead investigations into other critical issues, including food safety, Medicare fraud, waste, and abuse, and the relationship between thyroid cancer rates and exposure to nuclear fallout from Nevada testing in the 1940s. After working for Senator Glenn, Beth went on to serve as election counsel to Representative STENY HOYER and as Judiciary Committee counsel to U.S. Senator MARIA CANTWELL.

The work of a U.S. Senator is only as good as the staff that he or she hires, and in 2004 I was fortunate to convince Beth to join my staff, where she has served ever since. Throughout that time, she has served in a number of different capacities, distinguishing herself in each and every one of them. I owe a debt of gratitude to so many of my staff members across my career,