

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 That report was accompanied by important legislation to finally prohibit these outdated and ineffective measures.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,

but I would be remiss if I did not single out Beth for her especially meritorious contributions to my office over the past decade.

Beth began her work in my office as counsel, providing excellent advice on myriad constitutional and civil rights issues, among other things. One of her most noteworthy accomplishments from this time related to the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant, located not far from Burlington, IA. The history of the covert nuclear weapons program at the IAAP is a fascinating one that I could recount for hours. Suffice it to say that for decades the men and women of the Iowa Ammunition Plant worked on a secret nuclear weapons program, handling highly radioactive materials with protective gear of only cotton gloves—gloves that were intended to protect the weapons material from contact with humans, not to protect humans from contact with dangerous radioactive materials.

After my office helped to uncover the long history of dangerous working conditions at the IAAP, we still had to address the needs of hundreds of men and women who were exposed to radioactive materials and to try and help them receive compensation and health care to deal with the high rates of cancer and respiratory disease associated with their work. For years we struggled with various Federal agencies. We tried to seek a legislative fix. We sought an administrative remedy. It was finally under Beth's leadership that the men and women of the IAAP were designated a special exposure cohort, which made them eligible for compensation and medical care to account for medical expenses and lost wages. It is not an exaggeration to say that, but for Beth's efforts, the former workers of the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant might still be waiting on the Federal Government to appropriately compensate them for their service to our nation.

So much did I value Beth's work that when she decided that she wanted to take a step back and spend more time with her kids, I convinced her not to leave the payroll entirely but to stay on to work on special projects. In that capacity, Beth played a critical role in one of my proudest achievements, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008. This law was written in response to several Supreme Court decisions narrowing the definition of disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act. These narrow interpretations led to the denial of the ADA's protections for many individuals that Congress intended to protect under the ADA. The ADAAA made a number of changes to restore the intent of the ADA and to ensure that its protections were broadly available to persons with disabilities. Though the ADAAA passed the Senate by unanimous consent, a fact that is a credit to the Senate, one should not take from this the idea that it was easy. It required long negotiations and difficult

choices involving Congress, the administration, disability rights organizations, and business interests. Beth played a critical role in these negotiations, deftly managing both the politics and the policy. The result of her steady guiding hand is abundantly clear today: the ADA, as amended by the ADAAA, continues its impact as one of the landmark civil rights laws of the 20th century, the Emancipation Proclamation for Persons with Disabilities.

When I became chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, one of my first acts was to establish an investigative unit to provide critical oversight and investigations work. There was no question in my mind that Beth, with her relentlessness, eye for detail, and penchant for sifting through detritus to reveal the truth, was the person for the job. As my chief investigative counsel, she has delivered time and again, for example, uncovering labor abuses by government contractors that led to a White House Executive order clamping down on such abuses. Beth also played a key role in producing HELP Committee reports on the abusive use of seclusions and restraints in our Nation's schools, on barriers that stand in the way of the economic security of persons with disabilities, and on the rapid growth of e-cigarettes and their marketing.

Most noteworthy was Beth's leadership of the HELP Committee's investigation of abuses in the for-profit sector of higher education. This investigation spanned several years and culminated in the release of a multi-volume report detailing in remarkable detail the abuses by some for-profit colleges—in particular, their misuse of taxpayer funds, their poor educational outcomes, and the need for greater Federal oversight of these schools. This investigation was monumental both in its scale and in its level of detail. Beth oversaw every aspect of this very delicate investigation, which resulted in much greater scrutiny of the for-profit industry and which also put the investigations arm of the HELP Committee on the map.

About a year ago, I asked Beth to return to my personal office to serve as legislative director. In that capacity, she has done yeoman's work managing the legislative staff, helping in the unenviable job of closing our Senate office, and continuing to provide the excellent counsel that had made her indispensable for the past decade. And she has done all of this while continuing in her role as chief investigations counsel for the HELP Committee.

Mr. President, when I was growing up, my parents didn't talk politics. We didn't know politicians. But we knew this: When my family hit rock bottom in the late years of the Depression, with my father out of work and with no way to provide for his family, the government gave us a hand up. Dad got a postcard in the mail notifying him to

report for employment with the Work Projects Administration, the WPA. Dad always said that Franklin Roosevelt gave him a job. That opportunity gave my father dignity and enough money to put food on the table, and, maybe most important of all, it gave him hope.

As a proud Midwestern progressive, I have fought to give opportunity and hope to those who truly need it and deserve it, including working families seeking affordable health care and childcare, family farmers struggling to stay on the land, young people paying for college, and seniors seeking financial security in their retirement years.

But I haven't done it alone. Every Senator stands on the foundation of his or her staff, and on my staff Beth Stein has been a rock-solid cornerstone in that foundation. For her counsel, intelligence, and excellent work, and for helping me to be the best servant I can be to the people of Iowa and the United States, for working alongside me to do our best to give people hope, I extend my deepest gratitude to my counselor and friend Beth Stein.

TRIBUTE TO MILDRED OTERO

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President. As a boy growing up in rural Cumming, IA, population 150, I could never have imagined that I would one day serve in Congress. My father had a sixth-grade education. He spent most of his life working in coal mines, and all he had to show for it was a case of black lung disease. My mother was an immigrant, raising six kids in our little two-bedroom house. My parents did not talk politics. We did not know politicians. But we knew this: When my family hit rock bottom in the late years of the Depression, with my father out of work and with no way to provide for his family, the government gave us a hand up. Dad got a postcard in the mail, notifying him to report for employment with the Work Projects Administration, the WPA. Dad always said that Franklin Roosevelt gave him a job. That opportunity gave my father dignity, and enough money to put food on the table. Maybe most important of all, it gave him hope.

As a proud Midwestern progressive, my career has been guided by a desire to give hope to those who truly need it and deserve it, to provide a ladder of opportunity to working families seeking affordable health care and child care, family farmers struggling to stay on the land, and seniors seeking financial security in their retirement years. There is no rung on the ladder of opportunity more important than education, from rich early learning experiences, to college, and beyond.

As I have endeavored to give people hope and to provide them with a ladder of opportunity, I have not done it alone. I have been blessed to have one of the most capable staffs on Capitol Hill. I rise today to extend a personal thanks to one of the best, my chief