

TRIBUTE TO KAY HAGAN

Ms. HEITKAMP. Madam President, I rise today to honor my colleague from North Carolina, Senator KAY HAGAN, who is departing from the Senate at the end of this year. Senator HAGAN has been a strong voice for North Carolina's families, first during her decade in the North Carolina State Senate and during her service here in the United States Senate. Over the last two years, I have been consistently impressed with Senator HAGAN's compassion for and advocacy on behalf of her constituents and her willingness to forge the tough, bipartisan compromises that our country needs.

KAY actually first came to the Senate in the 1970s as an intern in the Capitol, where she operated the elevator that continues to carry Senators to and from the Chamber. After finishing her college education and pursuing her law degree, KAY became an attorney for North Carolina National Bank and eventually became a vice president in the estates and trust division.

Senator HAGAN's business and banking experience has been a tremendous asset during her time as a member of the banking committee, where we serve together. Senator HAGAN's understanding of the housing finance system and commitment to affordable housing was invaluable as she and I worked together with a bipartisan group of committee members to draft and advance legislation reforming the system to make sure the American taxpayer is protected and made whole. During the debate Senator HAGAN used her expert knowledge of the industry to craft a commonsense, bipartisan solution. Our proposal makes sure taxpayers are never left holding the bill again, while preserving the 30-year mortgage and supporting affordable housing—a huge accomplishment.

Senator HAGAN comes from a family and a State with a rich military history. Her father and brother both served in the Navy, and her husband, Chip, is a Navy Vietnam veteran. She has diligently supported and honored servicemembers and veterans as a member of the Armed Services Committee. She visited North Carolina troops in the Middle East to better understand their mission and needs, and she helped found the Military Family Caucus to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by those with loved ones abroad. In conjunction with her work on the small business committee, she introduced legislation to reduce veteran unemployment by providing employers a work opportunity tax credit for hiring a member of the National Guard.

As a member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and Chair of the Subcommittee on Children and Families, Senator HAGAN has consistently fought to make sure America's children have the education, tools, and resources to build a better tomorrow. In fact, Senator HAGAN's first bill was on a subject very dear to

me—financial literacy. Far too many young Americans fall victim to financial scams or take out too many loans because they haven't been given an adequate education on personal finances. Senator HAGAN's legislation—which she has pressed every Congress—would have helped States integrate financial literacy into middle- and high school curriculums. That is the kind of commonsense legislation Senator HAGAN is known for and Congress should be passing.

Senator HAGAN has been an outstanding public servant for the people of North Carolina. Although I am saddened to see such a well-respected female colleague depart from the Senate, I know Kay will continue to be a champion for North Carolina's families in the years ahead, and I wish her all the best.

AMENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE FAA MODERNIZATION AND REFORM ACT

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I join my colleague Senator INHOFE in the passage of S. 2614. This legislation corrects a glitch in the law that was doing great harm to 100,000 American Airlines employees, including approximately 10,000 employees working out of or residing in Ohio. Ninety-five percent of these workers were unionized.

We are talking about pilots, flight attendants, mechanics, ramp workers, and dispatchers, all unionized. Part of the collective bargaining agreement was a defined benefit pension plan. These are plans where you earn benefits through your hard work, and those benefits provide you with annuitized income for life.

When American Airlines went bankrupt, these workers all received a single lump sum payment. For pilots, these payments were as much as \$162,000, but the average payment was \$120,000. For other workers, these payouts were much, much less.

Now, \$162,000 may sound like a lot of money, and it is a lot. But not when it is meant to take the place of your entire pension for what could easily be a 20- or 30-year retirement. What we have done in the past for employees at United, Delta, Northwest, and US Airways is allow them to roll this entire amount over into an Individual Retirement Account or IRA.

It is important to understand what this is. When you roll over, you generally do not pay tax on it until you withdraw it from the new plan. The assets in the account continue to grow tax deferred. Deferred is the operative word.

This does not mean that the employees do not pay taxes. It means they will pay them as they make withdrawals to finance their own retirement. This bill is needed to give the American Airlines' employees that same opportunity. It is a simple fix, and it is the least we can do for workers who work hard and play by the

rules, but lost their pensions through no fault of their own.

TRIBUTE TO BRIAN AHLBERG

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, as I prepare to depart the Senate, I would like to take a few minutes to express my deep appreciation to Brian Ahlberg, my chief of staff for the last decade. Of course, every Senator knows that the title "chief of staff" encompasses a vast range of roles and responsibilities—counselor, confidant, kibitzer, trouble-shooter, day-to-day manager, strategic planner, and, in Brian's case, trusted friend. Brian has excelled in all of these critical roles, and I am very grateful to him.

Knute Rockne was fond of saying: "I've found that prayers work best when you have big players." As Senators, we know that it is not enough to be on the side of the angels; we have got to have big players. For me, that means big intellect, big work ethic, big heart. And those are qualities that Brian Ahlberg possesses in superabundance.

Brian originally joined my staff in 2003 as legislative director, after a decade of service in that role and others for my great friend Senator Paul Wellstone. In short order, I promoted him to chief of staff, and he has served in that role with enormous skill and professionalism ever since.

Staff directors on committees have the challenge of managing large staffs. As chief of staff, Brian has had what is arguably an even bigger challenge: managing me. He has done so with great loyalty, intelligence, tact, and consistently good judgment. He is the proverbial calm amidst every storm. When my Irish is up, Brian's Norwegian cool serves as a calming counterweight. He has never hesitated to speak up when he thinks I am wrong or misguided—an invaluable service. He has done a great job of allowing me, as Senator, to get into just enough trouble to be effective in my own job.

It has been said, perhaps only half jokingly, that Senators are a constitutional impediment to the smooth functioning of staff. I long ago learned to get out of Brian's way and let him manage my far-flung operation. We call ourselves Team Harkin—staffers on my Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, on my Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, and on my personal staff, both in Washington and back in Iowa. Brian is the impresario who skillfully coordinates their work as a single, collaborative team, skillfully resolving conflicts and keeping people focused on the mission at hand. I believe that Brian's skill in this role is a major reason for Team Harkin's remarkable legislative productivity over the last decade.

Brian has a great way of keeping my staff and me focused on what is truly important and strategic, avoiding detours and sidetracks. In meetings and