

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Alburnett Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Alburnett Community School District received a 2005 Harkin grant totaling \$500,000 which it is using to help expand and renovate the high school facility. Although parts of the construction project are still under way, this school will be a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, this is the kind of school that every child in America deserves. The district also received a fire safety grant in 2002 totaling \$50,000 which was used to construct a fire wall and repair existing exit signs.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Alburnett Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Barry Woodson, Mike Olinger, Dee Luedtke, Cindy Francois, David Kirk and Rhonda Lange, and former board president Duane Bolton and vice president Cregg Smith. I would also like to recognize the leadership of superintendent Mike Harrold and former superintendent Angel Melendez.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during

the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Alburnett Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

#### BEDFORD COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Bedford Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

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The Bedford Community School District received several Harkin fire safety grants totaling \$174,000 which it used to improve fire safety systems and included such things as emergency lighting and exit doors, new wiring and other electrical improvements, heat detectors, and sprinkler systems. The auditorium which was built in 1926 was renovated and the grant was used to update the wiring, install heat detectors and replace exit doors. The district had been cited by the State Fire Marshall for severe deficiencies in fire safety. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute superintendent Joe Drake and the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Bedford Community School District. In particular, I'd like to recog-

nize the leadership of the board of education—president Tony Brown, Layne Thornton, Mike Irvin, Ed Hensley, Jack Spencer and Rodger Ritchie. District staff who were helpful in the grant application and implementation process were business manager Sharon Hart, grant writer Paul Boysen, and buildings and grounds supervisor Dan Walston.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

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#### BELMOND-KLEMME COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Belmont-Klemme Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Belmont-Klemme Community School District received a 2005 Harkin