

MOUNT AYR COMMUNITY
EDUCATION

• Mr. HARKIN. Madam 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 Mount Ayr 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 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 Mount Ayr Community School District received several Harkin fire safety grants totaling \$124,500 which it used to repair fire safety problems. The grants were used to install new heat and smoke sensors, self-closing fire doors, evacuation lighting, and improved emergency exits and to rewire the fire panel. 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 Russ Reiter, the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Mount Ayr Community School District. In particular I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Rod Shields, former president and board member Craig Elliott, Beth Whitson, Dave Richards, James Uhlenkamp, and board secretary Jeanette Campbell. I would also like to recognize former superintendent Bill Decker who was instrumental along with the district staff in applying for and implementing the first grants. Also, the work of the following people should be cited: head custodian Clint Poore, secondary head custodian Mike Gilliland, and local contractor Ed Rotert.

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 Mount Ayr 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.●

NORTH IOWA COMMUNITY
EDUCATION

• Mr. HARKIN. Madam 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 North Iowa 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 North Iowa Community School District received several Harkin grants totaling \$812,000 which it used to help modernize the school building and to make safety improvements. The district received a 2001 Harkin grant for \$225,000 to help with classrooms for pre-school and before and after school programs. The district received a 2002 grant for \$437,500 to help make renovations in the auditorium and to improve accessibility at the elementary school and at the high school. This school is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. In-

deed, it is the kind of school facility that every child in America deserves. The district also received \$150,000 in fire safety grants to make safety improvements at schools throughout the district.

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 North Iowa Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—Rande Giesking, Diedre Willmert, Renae Sachs, Matt Duve, Julie Balvance, Andrea Bakker, and Michael Holstad, and former board members Kim Ruby, Irvan Olsen, Deb Wirth, Brandi Trent, David Brue, Dale Coy, Mark Ostermann, Tom Rygh, Jeff Heitland, Bruce Heitlans, and Christian Miller. I would also like to recognize superintendent Larry D. Hill, board secretary Cheryl Benn, Charlie Smith, K. Lynn Evans, Dr. John Laflen, and Brian Blodgett.

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SIoux CITY COMMUNITY
EDUCATION

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I would like to take just a few minutes, today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Sioux City 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