

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING MONTH OF THE
HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE

• Mr. AKAKA. Today I wish to speak to the celebration of the Hawaiian language. February is designated as the “Month of the Hawaiian Language” by the State of Hawai‘i. Speakers and students of the language use this time to foster and promote Hawaiian through festivals, spelling bees, and speech and debate competitions where the Hawaiian language is the primary medium.

Since the first official designation in 1994, February has been a celebration of the Hawaiian language in Hawai‘i. However, this modern renaissance happened only after the Hawaiian language came close to extinction, and the people of Hawai‘i fought to preserve it.

In 1896, following the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, English was named as the primary language of instruction in Hawai‘i’s schools. As a result, students who spoke Hawaiian were subject to physical punishment or public humiliation. As Native Hawaiian families struggled to assimilate with the increasing Western presence in Hawai‘i, parents gave children non-Hawaiian first names. Families who carried Hawaiian family names adopted Western surnames to avoid a Hawaiian identity. Parents stopped teaching their children Hawaiian, and maintained English-only households. This was a sad chapter in Hawai‘i’s history, but fortunately, today, thanks to the effort of many Hawai‘i residents, political and community leaders, and educators, the Hawaiian language is thriving.

In 1978, the Hawaiian language, also called ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i by its speakers, was declared one of the two legal languages of the State of Hawai‘i. In 1984, the first Hawaiian language preschool was established, ‘Aha Pūnana Leo. Three years later, Hawaiian language immersion expanded to include kindergarten through grade 12, and today, students can study the Hawaiian language from preschool through their doctorate studies.

Use of the Hawaiian language is not limited to its fluent speakers. Those who live in and visit Hawai‘i use Hawaiian words and phrases in their everyday vocabulary, whether they are Native Hawaiian or not. Towns, roadways, schools, and parks bear Hawaiian names. Island residents commonly give each other directions using the words mauka—meaning towards the mountains, or makai—meaning towards the ocean. A waitress might ask you if you are pau, or done, with your meal before she clears the table. You might tell her it was ‘ono, or delicious.

Some of the more commonly used words, including aloha and mahalo, are known well beyond the shores of Hawai‘i. I probably do not have to explain that mahalo means thank you, or that aloha is a greeting that conveys warmth, love, and affection and is used

to both welcome someone and wish them well.

The Hawaiian language is thriving in our modern society and it remains relevant as technology evolves around us. The iPhone and Google’s homepage are just two instances where the Hawaiian language can be selected as an option in language settings. Developers of the popular website, Wikipedia, borrowed the Hawaiian word wikiwiki, meaning speedy, for its name. Travelers through Honolulu International Airport are greeted every half hour with a public announcement first in Hawaiian, followed by its English translation. Local television reporters and weather forecasters consult with language experts on Hawaiian pronunciation. One of the morning news shows features a segment produced entirely in the Hawaiian language. Cable subscribers receive a channel featuring Hawaiian language reporting.

The Hawaiian language is engrained in our daily lives in Hawai‘i, and is important to all of Hawai‘i’s people. I am extremely grateful for the efforts made by kūpuna, our elders, as well as language and cultural educators, to preserve the Hawaiian language. According to the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo, there are approximately 7,500 people learning the Hawaiian language today, from preschools, institutions of higher education, and community programs. Parents are again raising their children to speak Hawaiian. While there is an increasing interest in the Hawaiian language, this is still just a small percentage of the population of the State of Hawai‘i. I applaud the State for designating February as the “Month of the Hawaiian Language” and bringing awareness to the need to perpetuate our language so that future generations may learn the language of their ancestors.

E ola mau ka ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i! Long live the Hawaiian language.●

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL GIRLS
AND WOMEN IN SPORTS DAY

• Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, today, February 1, I wish to celebrate the 26th annual National Girls and Women in Sports Day, on which we praise the importance of sports participation and athletics in the lives of girls and women everywhere. This year’s celebration has special meaning as it falls on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the passage of title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. For over 40 years, this historic law has furthered gender equality in sports participation in schools so that young women, including my three daughters, Caroline, Halina and Anne who all play soccer, may enjoy the benefits that come along with sports participation.

Studies show that participation in sports has a positive influence on the intellectual, physical and psychological health of young girls. According to the National Federation of State High School Associations, by a 3-1

ratio, female athletes do better in school, do not drop out, and have a better chance to get through college. Additionally, a study from the Women’s Sports Foundation showed that high school athletes are less likely to smoke cigarettes or use drugs than their non-athlete peers. Sports participation is also linked to lower rates of pregnancy in adolescent female athletes. With these statistics in mind, it is not surprising that a study from the Oppenheimer/MassMutual Financial Group shows that of 401 executive business women surveyed, 82 percent reported playing organized sports while growing up, including school teams, intramurals, and recreational leagues.

In my home State of Colorado, we are ahead of the curve with regard to the participation of girls and women in sports. The U.S. Olympic Training Center, located in Colorado Springs, was created by an act of Congress in 1978, just a few years after title IX was passed. It is encouraging to know that women like Gold Medal Winner Lindsey Vonn, now make up nearly half of all U.S. Olympians competing at the games, representing more than 48 percent of the 2008 team. Colorado also supports the success of Paralympians such as Sarah Will, who after a skiing accident that left her paralyzed from the waist down, went on to help found the Vail Monoski Camp and won 12 gold Paralympic medals from 1992 to 2002.

Colorado is also a vanguard in providing early education and sports opportunities for women. The flagship all girls school, GALS, Girls Athletic Leadership Schools, has opened its first public charter school in Denver, CO. The school practices active learning that engages students in health and wellness activities in the belief that these are key contributing factors in optimizing academic achievement and self-development. There are also groups such as the Colorado Women’s Sports Fund Association that work towards increasing the number of girls and women who participate in athletics and reducing and eliminating barriers that prevent participation.

Despite the vast improvements with regard to sports participation for girls and women, inequalities and disparities still remain. According to the National Federation of State High School Associations, schools are still providing 1.3 million fewer chances for girls to play sports in high school than boys. These numbers have an even greater impact on Latinas and African-American young women. The Women’s Sports Foundation shows that less than two-thirds of these girls play sports while more than three-quarters of Caucasian girls do. And three-quarters of boys from immigrant families are involved in athletics, while less than half of girls from immigrant families are.

Mr. President, we have work to do. Part of our job is to promote the importance of this national effort to grow the rates of female athletes. Please