

can devise a plan. I call on the leaders of Congress to support such an initiative. We need to do more. End hunger now. End hunger now. End hunger now.

Mr. Speaker, we can do this. We must do this.

#### CONFIRMATION OF SENATOR CHUCK HAGEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

I want to thank President Obama for his nomination of Chuck Hagel to be Secretary of Defense.

While we were home last week, I had the opportunity to watch the Senate confirmation hearing, and I was dismayed by the way many of the Republicans in that hearing chastised Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel is a man of integrity. The question from one of the Senators about, do you think the surge worked, and Senator Hagel was such that he didn't want to give him a direct answer. I would have said, no, it didn't work—1,200 Americans killed, I don't know how many Iraqis. And look at the country today. It's totally falling apart. But that was a question toward Senator Hagel.

Mr. Speaker, the Iraq war was very unnecessary. It was manufactured by the previous administration, and there was a general, Marine General Greg Newbold, who had been working with the Department of Defense, who actually wrote an article in Time after the war started. And one of the points he made that I'm going to share with you, Mr. Speaker, is "some of the missteps include the distortion of intelligence in the buildup to the war." The distortion of intelligence in the buildup to the war.

In the history of Washington, if ever our government needed integrity, it's now. Chuck Hagel is a man of integrity. No one can question his integrity.

I've had the privilege of knowing Senator Hagel since 2005 when I came out against the unnecessary war in Iraq. Senator Hagel reached out to me in support of my position and encouraged me in my journey to find out the truth, if it was necessary or not.

His record speaks for itself. As a non-commissioned officer, he honorably served this Nation in Vietnam, earning two Purple Hearts, served on the Senate Committee on Intelligence and the Committee on Foreign Relations, as well as the President's Intelligence Advisory Board and the Secretary of Defense Policy Board. No one can argue Chuck Hagel's experience.

Mr. Speaker, I know that Chuck Hagel is the right man to lead the Department of Defense through this very difficult economic time. He's a man that will uphold the Constitution and do what is right for this country. Our military and the American people need

Chuck Hagel to be the Secretary of Defense.

Mr. Speaker, before closing, I must say that, in my many years here in Washington, 18 years, I have never known a person with more integrity than Senator Hagel, and I hope that the Senate will pass on the confirmation of Chuck Hagel to be the Secretary of Defense because America needs him, our military needs him, and it's time for people of integrity to step up and help us fix this problem facing our Nation. And he will speak freely and honestly about what is needed to keep a strong military.

#### NATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of National Catholic Schools Week and to recognize the outstanding contribution that Catholic schools have made to our Nation. Catholic Schools Week was celebrated last week in schools all across the country.

As a proud graduate of St. Symphorosa Grammar School and St. Ignatius College Prep, and a strong supporter of Catholic education, I, once again this year, introduced a resolution honoring Catholic schools. H. Res. 46 expresses support for "the vital contributions of the thousands of Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the United States" and "the key role they play in promoting and ensuring a brighter, stronger future for the Nation." I'd like to thank the 28 Members who cosponsored this bipartisan resolution with me.

Since 1974, the National Catholic Education Association and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have organized and planned National Catholic Schools Week. This year's theme, "Catholic Schools Raise the Standards," highlights recent initiatives undertaken by Catholic schools across the country to strengthen their already exemplary standards.

America's Catholic schools produce graduates with the skills and integrity needed by our businesses, governments, and communities, emphasizing a well-rounded educational experience and instilling the values of "giving back to the community" and "helping others." Nearly every Catholic school has a community service program, and every year their students volunteer half a million hours to their communities. My own decision to pursue a career in public service was fostered, in part, by dedicated teachers throughout my formative years in Catholic schools.

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Today over 2 million elementary and secondary students are enrolled in nearly 7,000 Catholic schools. These students typically surpass their peers in math, science, reading, history, and

geography in any NAEP test. The graduation rate for Catholic high school students is 99 percent, and 85 percent of graduates enrolled in four-year colleges, rates well above the national average. As we continually hear disturbing reports of our national test scores, these statistics are truly remarkable and should be commended.

Notably, the success of Catholic schools does not depend on selectivity. Catholic schools accept nine out of every 10 students who apply and are highly effective in providing a quality education to students from every socioeconomic category, especially disadvantaged youth in underserved urban communities. Over the past 30 years, the percentage of minority students enrolled in Catholic schools has more than doubled, and today they constitute almost one-third of all Catholic school students. In times of economic hardship, Catholic schools provide an affordable alternative to other forms of private education.

Now, in addition to producing well-rounded students, it is estimated that Catholic schools save taxpayers over \$18 billion annually. The importance of these savings is undeniable as we in Congress, and lawmakers across the country, struggle with budget deficits.

I was born and raised in the Chicago Archdiocese, where more than 87,000 students attend 250 schools. In the Joliet Diocese close by, 22,000 students are educated in 48 elementary and 7 high schools. In my district alone, there are nearly a dozen Catholic high schools and more than 50 grammar schools, including one of the best in my home parish, St. John of the Cross in Western Springs, which last year was named a National Blue Ribbon School by the Department of Education.

The focus of this year's Catholic Schools Week, "Catholic Schools Raise the Standards," demonstrates a continued commitment to excellence. The National Catholic Education Association has launched an initiative called the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools which will make sure that standards are consistently high across the country. The dedicated teachers and administrators who work at Catholic schools, many of whom could earn much more elsewhere, are instrumental in upholding these standards. In recognizing Catholic Schools Week, we pay a special tribute to these professionals who sacrifice so much for their students.

During Catholic Schools Week last week, I visited several schools in my district, including St. Dennis in Lockport, St. Cajetan in Chicago, and St. Alphonsus/St. Patrick in Lemont. At each of these schools, I was able to visit with students and witness the excellent Catholic education that was being instilled by teachers, administrators, pastors, and volunteer parents. The dedication of all those involved in educating these children demonstrated why Catholic schools are so successful