

The fraternity has worked hard to promote responsible management of the desert bighorn and its habitat. By building and maintaining hundreds of water development projects, fighting disease, and educating domestic sheep herders on the importance of maintaining strict separations between bighorn sheep and domestic herds, the fraternity has provided necessary water resources to Southern Nevada wildlife and ensured a healthy bighorn sheep population for future generations.

I commend the Fraternity of the Desert Bighorn on their 50th anniversary, and I wish them the best in their future endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO MIRA BALL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to honor and congratulate my good friend, Mira Ball. On June 5, Mira will receive the Midway College Legacy Award for her many contributions and years of service to Midway College, located in Midway, KY.

Mira is the first ever recipient of this award, which will be given out at the Inaugural Spotlight awards in June. The purpose of the Legacy Award is to recognize “a person or persons that have impacted Midway College over a period of many years by giving time, service, support and/or resources.” With such a description, it’s no wonder that Mira was the first in line to receive it.

Mira’s contributions to Midway College, which is Kentucky’s only women’s college and a leader in degree programs for men and women, are aplenty. She has served on the board of trustees since 1990, became the first woman to chair the board in 1997, and was honored to be elected a life trustee in 2000. Last year, she served as interim chair while the institution was in a transitional period.

Even with her devotion to Midway College, Mira has amazingly found time to pursue a multitude of other interests and causes. She became the first woman president of the Lexington Chamber of Commerce in 1991 and was also the first woman to chair the University of Kentucky board of trustees, a post she occupied from 2007 to 2010. If you hadn’t noticed, my friend Mira has never been afraid to be the first to do anything.

Additionally, Mira has been one of our State’s strongest advocates for education reform, and she currently serves on the endowment board of Kentucky Educational Television, KET. She is also an involved member of the Calvary Baptist Church and is an active philanthropist to health care and education groups.

Somehow, amidst this seemingly endless stream of extracurricular activities, Mira carves out some time for her day job. She serves as the chief financial officer for the very successful Ball Homes LLC homebuilders, which she runs with her husband, Don, and their three children—Ray Ball, Mike Ball,

and Lisa Ball Sharp. In addition to their children, Mira and Don have seven grandchildren—making for a wonderful family that is undoubtedly her biggest achievement of all.

Mira’s tireless efforts to better the lives of others deserve the recognition of this body. Thus, I ask that my U.S. Senate colleagues join me in honoring Mira Ball, and congratulating her for being the first-ever recipient of the prestigious Midway College Legacy Award.

NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, 26 years ago Members of Congress decided to designate May as National Foster Care Month. Since then, the U.S. Congress, the Children’s Bureau at the Department of Health and Human Services, and the National Foster Parent Association have worked together to recognize the work of foster families, social workers, faith-based and community organizations, and others who are improving the lives of foster youth across the country and to encourage all Americans to participate in efforts to serve these children throughout the year.

I have come to the floor today, alongside my esteemed colleague and co-chair on the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth, to recognize the foster parents, social workers, and advocates from my home State of Louisiana and around the country who play an essential role in the lives of children in foster care throughout the United States. I also want to acknowledge the leaders of the House Caucus on Foster Youth—Representative KAREN BASS, Representative TOM MARINO, Representative MICHELE BACHMANN, and Representative JIM McDERMOTT—who already have or will soon speak on the floor, as well, to commemorate National Foster Care Month.

Each day 691 new children enter the foster care system because of abuse or neglect. Each week 4,852 children find themselves on the beginning of their journey through “the system.” Over 79,000 children will call this system home for more than 3 years, and more than 23,400 young adults will “age out” of the system without a safe, permanent family. Of those that age out, studies indicate that only 25 percent have a high school diploma or GED, less than 2 percent finish college, over half experience homelessness, and nearly 30 percent have been incarcerated.

As I have long said, governments do many things well, but raising children is not, and will never be, one of them. Our foster care system should be temporary—it is a temporary place where children should go to be protected and nurtured until they can be returned to their birth family, be placed with extended family, or be connected with an adoptive parent or parents. Unfortunately, all too often this is not how it happens. Forty percent of those eligi-

ble for adoption will wait over 3 years in foster care before being adopted. Even worse, 23,000 youth—25 percent of those eligible for adoption—“age out” or emancipate from the system each year. We cannot rest until our Federal and state governments are 100 percent successful at connecting these children—who have been placed under the government’s care due to no fault of their own—with permanent, safe, and loving families.

It is our responsibility to find homes for the huge numbers of abandoned and orphaned children in the United States. For this reason, I created a new pilot grant in the fiscal year 14 Omnibus to enable States to initiate intensive and exhaustive child-focused recruitment programs, proven to increase adoptions out of foster care 3 to 1. The \$4 million dollars that I secured for this program will enable States to move foster youth eligible for adoption into permanent families at a much higher rate than traditional recruitment strategies. This is because these grants will provide social workers with the resources, time, and mandate to actually open up the file of youth in care and identify the names and contact information of parents, relatives, caregivers, and other significant adults in that child’s life. This intense review, often called “case mining,” is key in locating a caring adult able to commit to reunification, adoption or legal guardianship for foster youth.

There are many other strategies that our government can implement to increase permanency for foster children. Just last week the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, led by executive director Kathleen Strotzman, hosted a policy focused briefing to educate congressional staff about how postadoption services are cost-effective and enormously beneficial alternatives to children reentering foster care or having their adoptions dissolved. The Federal Government spends an average of \$27,236 annually for each child in care covered by Federal funding—and much more for those in group homes or residential treatment centers—compared to \$5,043 for a child receiving adoption assistance covered by Federal funding adoptions. There currently is no Federal funding stream dedicated exclusively to postadoption services. We as legislators must consider ways in which we can increase the overall resources dedicated to post-adoption.

As I have stated, it is our responsibility to invest in initiatives that are proven to be successful in finding permanent solutions for our nation’s foster children. I encourage my colleagues to cosponsor S. Res. 442, “Recognizing National Foster Care Month as an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges of children in the foster care system, and encouraging Congress to implement policy to improve the lives of children in the foster care system.”

I yield my time to my esteemed colleague and co chair of the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth, Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak today about the foster care system and the impact the system has on the lives of far too many children, young adults, and families.

Currently, more than 400,000 children across the United States are in the foster care system. From its inception, the foster care system was designed to be a safe and temporary place of transition for kids who have nowhere else to go. Of those currently calling the foster care system home, 79,000 will stay in foster care for more than 3 years. More than 23,400 will age out of foster care without finding an adoptive family or a permanent place to call home.

Furthermore, youth who age out of the foster care system experience unique struggles that extend beyond the usual anxieties of trying to establish a life after high school. In fact, only one quarter has earned a high school diploma or GED, while less than 2 percent finish college. Worse yet, more than 50 percent will experience homelessness and nearly 30 percent will have spent time behind bars.

That is why we recognize May as National Foster Care Month. Senator LANDRIEU and I have introduced a resolution to shed light on the many young faces that seek a permanent home and family. We also set aside a moment to recognize the countless number of people who work tirelessly for youth in foster care.

Stability comes from a much larger community than just a family. Stability comes from the teacher who sees the student at the desk near the back of the classroom who needs a little extra help and guidance. Stability comes from the friends and neighbors who take it upon themselves to invite the new face in the neighborhood to join in a game of basketball or swimming. Stability comes from the social workers who work tirelessly to help resolve the issues at home foster youth face or, if necessary, they help find a permanent home that will offer warmth and happiness. And most importantly, stability comes from the families who are willing to take a child or group of children into their home, to provide a safe and nurturing environment so that they have a chance to grow and thrive.

I call upon my colleagues to support S. Res. 442 recognizing National Foster Care Month as an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges of children in the foster care system and encouraging Congress to implement policy to improve the lives of children in the foster care system. The resolution also recognizes foster youth throughout the United States for their courage and resilience as they move through their personal trials and challenges. We also seek to applaud the youth who have moved on from the foster care

system but remain active to serve as advocates and role models for those who remain in the system.

However, while we seek to applaud and commend those who continue to be a beacon of hope for these youth, the resolution is also intended to reaffirm the need to continue to improve the outcomes for all children in the foster care system. Every child deserves the stability and certainty that a loving, permanent home and family can provide.

Congress has been working to improve the lives of all those touched by the foster care system. That has included providing support to vulnerable families, with the hope of safely keeping families intact while they work through difficult times. We have promoted policies that encourage reunification of families when they successfully address issues that make homes safe and nurturing for children. We have helped create incentives to promote adoption when reunification isn't possible. For those who age out of the foster care system without a permanent place to call home, we have been working to make the transition to adulthood more certain.

That is why in 2009 Senator LANDRIEU and I launched the bipartisan Senate Caucus on Foster Youth. The caucus works to provide an outlet for Members and staff to provide educational opportunities in order to help shape meaningful policy that works to bring children and families together.

The caucus has created a gateway for grassroots coalitions of families, foster youth, child welfare advocates, court representatives, and social workers to locate policymakers who are actively fighting and supporting tools to improve the lives of all children and families. The caucus has created an avenue for all stakeholders to help identify barriers that block foster kids from finding a permanent, loving home either through adoption, guardianship, or reunification with their birth family.

The caucus is currently offering a series of opportunities designed to introduce Members and staff to the issue of child welfare financing. The meetings have been designed to provide a collegial environment to build a base of knowledge for those less familiar with the issue and to help those who have been working on the issue for many years.

So far this spring, we have had a chance to hear from specialists and experts about the early history of child welfare and how it has developed into the programs that we see today. We are studying how the current system is structured, how we can improve it, and how we can better incentivize States to find permanent placements for foster youth.

In the past, we have studied and acted to improve the educational stability of the students. There are numerous cases of children who move from school to school within a given

year. Just as they have an opportunity to form a series of friendships, they are ushered on to another school to begin the process yet again. Beyond the problems of building meaningful relationships, many foster youth have to worry about how their credits transfer from one school to the next. Many students are required to take a class numerous times in multiple schools because of varying requirements. Oftentimes, this creates a gap that extends the amount of time it takes a student to fulfill the requirements to complete school.

Another issue that comes up is sex trafficking. Youth in the foster care system can be susceptible to domestic sexual predators who offer them financial assistance and emotional bonds.

Just recently, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI, rescued 18 minors from forced prostitution around the time of the Super Bowl. Of the 18 minors, 3 were from the foster care system. I sent a letter to the FBI to ask the agency to explain how underage victims are treated once they are rescued from forced prostitution. From my inquiry so far, it seems the FBI has taken positive steps, including making clear that those who are forced into prostitution are victims, not criminals. The FBI also has a coordinated effort that has recovered a number of juvenile victims. But it is important to track what happens to victims after rescue. Are they getting the protections and services they need to stay safe or are they ending up back in dangerous situations? If they came from foster care, did the system fail to protect them?

The Senate Finance Committee approved a bipartisan bill in December to improve the foster care system. The bill seeks to protect foster youth and to encourage officials to better prevent, identify, and intervene when a child becomes a victim of trafficking.

Our caucus has taken a lead in educating the public about this issue. We heard from two incredibly brave survivors of trafficking who had beaten the odds, escaped "the life," and are now working as mentors with other girls who have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked.

The caucus has raised a number of other important issues, and we have invited youth to share their personal experiences. They are the experts, and we can learn from them.

I am glad to report the caucus is gaining strong support from across party lines and regional areas of the country. I am glad that we have had nine new members this year, including Senators CRAPO, SCOTT, KAINE, WARNER, KLOBUCHAR, INHOFE, WICKER, HEITKAMP, and JOHANNIS.

We will continue working to keep the national spotlight on the challenges confronting foster youth. Every child deserves the stability and certainty that a loving, permanent home and family can provide. I thank my colleagues for their support in this endeavor.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY, IOWA

• Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, the strength of my State of Iowa lies in its vibrant local communities, where citizens come together to foster economic development, make smart investments to expand opportunity, and take the initiative to improve the health and well-being of residents. Over the decades, I have witnessed the growth and revitalization of so many communities across my State. And it has been deeply gratifying to see how my work in Congress has supported these local efforts.

I have always believed in accountability for public officials, and this, my final year in the Senate, is an appropriate time to give an accounting of my work across four decades representing Iowa in Congress. I take pride in accomplishments that have been national in scope—for instance, passing the Americans with Disabilities Act and spearheading successful farm bills. But I take a very special pride in projects that have made a big difference in local communities across my State.

Today, I would like to give an accounting of my work with leaders and residents of Pottawattamie County to build a legacy of a stronger local economy, better schools and educational opportunities, and a healthier, safer community.

Between 2001 and 2013, the creative leadership in your community has worked with me to secure funding in Pottawattamie County worth over \$24 million and successfully acquired financial assistance from programs I have fought hard to support, which have provided more than \$65 million to the local economy.

Of course my favorite memories of working together have to include the Pottawattamie County Preschool Initiative plan was developed to dramatically expand preschool for more than 250 unserved children, several affordable housing and main street reconstruction projects, as well as work on transportation infrastructure and airport improvements. While I have worked to secure more than \$2.8 million for the Pottawattamie County Preschool Initiative, as part of the private-public partnership, the Iowa West Foundation also committed \$7 million for the early learning initiative. This is the type of investment Iowa needs to ensure a brighter economic future for every student. I look forward to learning how this program has impacted students in Pottawattamie County.

Among the highlights:

Investing in Iowa's economic development through targeted community projects: In Western Iowa, we have worked together to grow the economy by making targeted investments in important economic development projects including improved roads and bridges, modernized sewer and water systems,

and better housing options for residents of Pottawattamie County. In many cases, I have secured Federal funding that has leveraged local investments and served as a catalyst for a whole ripple effect of positive, creative changes. For example, working with mayors, city council members, and local economic development officials in Pottawattamie County, I have fought for over \$16 million to reconstruct the Avenue G viaduct, over \$2.5 million for affordable housing projects, and secured \$2 million to make sure the airport got priority for a new runway through the Federal Aviation Administration, helping to create jobs and expand economic opportunities.

School grants: Every child in Iowa deserves to be educated in a classroom that is safe, accessible, and modern. That is why, for the past decade and a half, I have secured funding for the innovative Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program—better known among educators in Iowa as Harkin grants for public schools construction and renovation. Across 15 years, Harkin grants worth more than \$132 million have helped school districts to fund a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools. In many cases, these Federal dollars have served as the needed incentive to leverage local public and private dollars, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect within a school district. Over the years, Pottawattamie County has received \$5.1 million in Harkin grants. Similarly, schools in Pottawattamie County have received funds that I designated for Iowa Star Schools for technology totaling \$168,650.

Keeping Iowa communities safe: I also firmly believe that our first responders need to be appropriately trained and equipped, able to respond to both local emergencies and to statewide challenges such as, for instance, the methamphetamine epidemic. Since 2001, Pottawattamie County's fire departments have received over \$1.5 million for firefighter safety and operations equipment.

Wellness and health care: Improving the health and wellness of all Americans has been something I have been passionate about for decades. That is why I fought to dramatically increase funding for disease prevention, innovative medical research, and a whole range of initiatives to improve the health of individuals and families not only at the doctor's office but also in our communities, schools, and workplaces. I am so proud that Americans have better access to clinical preventive services, nutritious food, smoke-free environments, safe places to engage in physical activity, and information to make healthy decisions for themselves and their families. These efforts not only save lives, they will also save money for generations to come thanks to the prevention of costly chronic diseases, which account for

a whopping 75 percent of annual health care costs. I am pleased that Pottawattamie County has recognized this important issue by securing more than \$5.6 million for the Community Health Center.

Disability Rights: Growing up, I loved and admired my brother Frank, who was deaf. But I was deeply disturbed by the discrimination and obstacles he faced every day. That is why I have always been a passionate advocate for full equality for people with disabilities. As the primary author of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA, and the ADA Amendments Act, I have had four guiding goals for our fellow citizens with disabilities: equal opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency. Nearly a quarter century since passage of the ADA, I see remarkable changes in communities everywhere I go in Iowa—not just in curb cuts or closed captioned television, but in the full participation of people with disabilities in our society and economy, folks who at long last have the opportunity to contribute their talents and to be fully included. These changes have increased economic opportunities for all citizens of Pottawattamie County, both those with and without disabilities. And they make us proud to be a part of a community and country that respects the worth and civil rights of all of our citizens.

This is at least a partial accounting of my work on behalf of Iowa, and specifically Pottawattamie County, during my time in Congress. In every case, this work has been about partnerships, cooperation, and empowering folks at the State and local level, including in Pottawattamie County, to fulfill their own dreams and initiatives. And, of course, this work is never complete. Even after I retire from the Senate, I have no intention of retiring from the fight for a better, fairer, richer Iowa. I will always be profoundly grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of Iowa as their Senator.●

HARRISON COUNTY, IOWA

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