

COMMEMORATING HANFORD B's  
SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today with my colleague Senator CANTWELL to commemorate the Hanford B Reactor in our home State of Washington as we approach the 70th anniversary of the world's first full-scale self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction. An essential part of the Manhattan Project, on September 26, 1944, the B Reactor was successfully energized to convert uranium into plutonium, an event known as going critical. The entire facility was built in only 13 months, and only a handful of the 50,000 workers at the site knew what was being assembled. The speed and precision of the construction of the facility remain an engineering marvel today. It was not until later that the majority of these workers learned they had played a key role in the history of nuclear materials production in the United States and helped the U.S. win World War II and the Cold War.

The B Reactor went on to operate for more than 20 years until 1968, making its mark on the 20th century. After ceasing operations, the B Reactor was to be encased in concrete like all the other reactors as part of the Hanford Reservation cleanup efforts. Given the B Reactor's historic role, I worked for many years with Senator CANTWELL and the entire Washington delegation to ensure this piece of our nation's history is preserved for generations to come. After years of hard work, I was pleased when the U.S. Department of the Interior designated the B Reactor as a national historic landmark in 2008, and the B Reactor now receives more than 10,000 visitors a year from around the Nation and the world to see and experience this important part of world history. Today, the B Reactor remains a symbol for the Hanford Reservation, the entire Tri-Cities community, Washington State, and our Nation as a whole.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I join my colleague Senator MURRAY in commemorating this important day in American history. Seventy years ago, when the B Reactor went critical, it forever changed history and thrust society into the Atomic Age. On September 26, 1944 the Manhattan Project overcame a major obstacle when the B Reactor—the first full-scale nuclear reactor—proved that it was possible to develop plutonium in large quantities, and the world was forever transformed. Our constituents in Washington State are reminded of that change daily, as the workers at the Hanford Reservation continue their efforts to clean up the legacy of the B Reactor and the eight other reactors built and operated at Hanford. The history of this fateful day and the entire Manhattan Project must be remembered so that our Nation has the opportunity to reflect on and learn from the important lessons this facility has to offer.

Our collective work to designate the B Reactor as a national historic land-

mark is a great start, but the Manhattan Project story cannot be told at the B Reactor alone. This is why I am working with Senator MURRAY and our colleagues in Tennessee and New Mexico to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. The Manhattan Project National Historical Park Act would commemorate the historic achievements made by the workers at the Hanford Reservation and at other Manhattan Project sites across the country. The men and women who worked on the B Reactor played an unforgettable role in our Nation's history, and it is important that we remember their lasting impact.

Mrs. MURRAY. I commend Senator CANTWELL for her work on the Manhattan Project National Historical Park Act and will continue to push this legislation forward with our colleagues in Congress. The 70th anniversary of the world's first full-scale nuclear reactor going critical is a fitting tribute and reminder that this landmark moment in history should be preserved for future generations through the creation of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

TRIBUTE TO DR. JAMES MEZA, JR.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I wish to recognize and honor Dr. James Meza, Jr., who has devoted much of his life to ensuring that all of Louisiana's students receive an excellent education. He currently serves as Superintendent of the Jefferson Parish Public School System and while he will soon retire from this role, he will be leaving behind an indelible mark of impressive leadership and results. On behalf of the U.S. Senate and the State of Louisiana, I applaud Dr. Meza as a champion of high quality education and for his devotion to Louisiana's public education system.

Dr. Meza's experience in education spans more than 40 years and crosses teaching and leadership positions both at the K-12 and higher education levels. As a champion of education reform, Dr. Meza developed many of the pioneering ideas in Louisiana that led to revolutionary reform movements across the Nation. In the devastating aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Gustav, Dr. Meza was instrumental in one of the most transformational endeavors of modern public education helping to establish the Recovery School District in New Orleans, LA, which is now 100 percent public charter schools and has experienced extraordinary progress in closing the achievement gap.

Dr. Meza served most recently as the Superintendent of Jefferson Parish Public School System, Louisiana's largest and most diverse school district, serving 46,000 students. Since becoming the head of Jefferson Parish Public School System in 2011, Dr. Meza has led a reform agenda that has transformed the school system from one in a downward spiral for achievement to

one of Louisiana's most improved school systems. In 2 years, Jefferson Parish Public School System has improved its State performance rating from a letter grade "D" to "B." In that same period, the number of "A" and "B" schools has increased dramatically, from 13 to 32. Jefferson Parish is home to 4 schools that are ranked in the top 10 in Louisiana.

Prior to becoming Superintendent of Jefferson Parish Public School System, Dr. Meza served as Professor and Dean at the University of New Orleans, UNO, for more than 21 years where he published more than 40 journal articles to study education reform, specifically focused on serving children of low-income families in Louisiana and nationwide. Dr. Meza is recognized nationally for redefining the role of colleges of education and their work with low performing schools. As Dean, he launched the UNO Charter School Network of four charter schools, as well as Louisiana's first Type 5—turnaround—charter school. His efforts were recognized by New Orleans City Business, which presented him with the "Innovator of the Year" award. He received the honor and title of Professor and Dean Emeritus from the LSU system, recognizing his years of scholarship at UNO.

Dr. Meza has served as the Executive Director of the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, BESE, and the Interim State Superintendent of Education for Louisiana. During this time, he was a pioneer in school accountability, launching Louisiana's educational quality and trust fund, 8G, and restructuring the Department of Education as Louisiana transformed the State Superintendent's position from an elected position to one appointed by BESE. Dr. Meza also has served as a faculty member at Nicholls State University, principal of Cabrini High School, and teacher at E.D. White and Isidore Newman High School.

Dr. Meza has received numerous awards and deserved recognitions for his transformational work in the education sphere. He is the recipient of The Weiss Award by the New Orleans Council for Community and Justice, which honors members of the Greater New Orleans community for civic and humanitarian contributions. He has also been recognized as a "Super Hero" by the national organization Stand for Children for his work in improving quality educational opportunities for children of poverty.

Dr. Meza currently serves on the Board of Directors of Holy Cross School and was a member of the Louisiana Serve Commission and the Southern University System Board of Supervisors. He is also a founding board member of Ben Franklin High School and Edward Hynes charter schools. Dr. Meza served 32 years in the Louisiana Army National Guard and retired at the rank of Colonel.

I am proud that Louisiana's students and teachers have had the strong leadership and guidance of Dr. Meza over