

education counsel, Mildred Otero, who has stood stalwartly alongside me in my efforts to secure for every American a quality education from cradle to career.

Mildred came to Washington in 2003 as a Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Public Policy Fellow, working for then-Senator Hillary Clinton. Over the years, she has also worked at the Children's Defense Fund, for Senator JACK REED, and at the Department of State. Before joining the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, Mildred served as Senior Policy Officer at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, helping to lead its Federal advocacy efforts for U.S. programs.

When she arrived at the HELP Committee, she brought with her sterling credentials, unmatched knowledge of education policy, and a reputation as a tough but fair negotiator. Most importantly, she brought with her a commitment to children and a determination to confront the savage inequalities in America's public education system, and these priorities have been the foundation of all the work that she does. For Mildred, "leave no child behind" is not a slogan, it is an imperative, an obligation that motivates her every day to strive to do what is best for the children of our country, especially those who are born into disadvantage.

Mildred's commitment to our children and her determination to extend a hand up to the disadvantaged have borne fruit in significant accomplishments since she joined the HELP Committee.

Foremost among these accomplishments was passage last summer of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, a bill to update and strengthen our Nation's job training programs. Frankly, to call enactment of this bill an accomplishment is a huge understatement. This is a bill that had been stalled for years due to one disagreement after another, each seemingly as intractable as the next. But for Mildred, what others see as an intractable disagreement is just another challenge to work through with creativity and diplomacy. Work through them she did, one after another, until all that was left was final passage of the bill. It is testament to Mildred's determination, creativity, and skill that the final bill passed by a vote of 95-3. As a result of her work on this bill, millions of Americans will be able to upgrade their skills, obtain better jobs, and ultimately, better their lives and the economic security of their families.

Mildred and her team also successfully guided into the law improvements to the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which allocates more than \$5 billion annually and supports more than 1.5 million children across the country. The last reauthorization of this program took place 18 years ago, at a time when child care was principally seen as a work-support activity and only incidentally as something that could have a positive impact

on the development of children. Today, backed up by impressive scientific research, we know that this program can and should be much more. In addition to providing vital work support for parents, it should be a rich early-learning opportunity for children. These are exactly the kinds of improvements that Mildred shepherded into law. Among other things, the bill requires States to improve education and training requirements, strengthens licensing requirements, and stipulates that States must demonstrate how they are meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children, especially children with disabilities.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention Mildred's effort in the K-12 and higher education spaces. Last summer, the HELP Committee, under Mildred's guidance, passed the Strengthening America's Schools Act of 2013. This bill, an update to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, provided a framework to ensure that all children graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and their careers. With Mildred's guidance, the Strengthening America's Schools Act focused greater attention on early childhood, encouraged equity through fair distribution of resources, and maintained a laser focus on helping all children, but especially disadvantaged children, to succeed in school.

Mildred brought similar energy to her efforts this year on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, efforts that culminated with the introduction of the Higher Education Affordability Act. For generations, a college education has been the pathway to the middle class, but new challenges are threatening that promise for many families in Iowa and across the country. College affordability, skyrocketing student debt, transparency—these are high stakes issues for students and families. The Higher Education Affordability Act seeks changes to our system of higher education in order to make college more affordable and accessible, and to restore and strengthen the ladder of opportunity—a ladder that has been growing weaker and that is in need of repair.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said that "life's most urgent and persistent question is: what are you doing for others?" During her tenure as a senior counselor on the HELP Committee, Mildred has answered that question in powerful ways, and in particular through her tireless efforts to bring greater equity to public education at all levels. We respect her expertise, and we admire the strong moral voice that she has brought to the Committee. I am deeply grateful to Mildred for her superb leadership of the Committee's Education Office, and I wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

## ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

### TRIBUTE TO DON HOUSE

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I wish to honor Don House, who will retire as the Walnut Ridge Mayor after 4 years of public service to the citizens of the community.

Mayor House constantly stressed the spirit of cooperation within and between each city department, and the importance of good work ethic among its employees. That is why when he began his service as mayor he met with all of the community's employees.

Don led a reorganization of the police department in an effort to serve the needs of the community more responsibly, including a crackdown on drug dealers and drug manufacturers within the city. Don also oversaw the completion of the Northeast Arkansas Water Authority project, improving the water quality in Walnut Ridge.

In addition to serving as mayor, Don lived in Lawrence County most of his life, owned House-Gregg Funeral Home—a local funeral home and family business, and held office in the Arkansas State House of Representatives.

I applaud Don for his outstanding achievements and success as city mayor. My staff and I have enjoyed working with Mayor House on the projects important to Walnut Ridge. I am truly appreciative of his dedication, leadership, and eagerness to serve Arkansas. ●

### RECOGNIZING THE IDAHO FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's 75th year as an organization.

The Idaho Farm Bureau, which was started in 1939 in Murtaugh as an organization of farm and ranch families, has represented the interests of Idaho producers in addressing agriculture and natural resources issues. The organization is focused on "formulating action to achieve educational improvement, economic opportunity, and social advancement and thereby, to promote the national well-being."

Idaho is home to more than 25,000 farms and ranches. Farm families support our communities and are central to our economy and our State's culture. The pressures on these hard-working producers meeting the food needs of a growing world population are increasing as the pressures on our natural resources increase. Consideration of how policy changes affect this bedrock is critical to long-term economic growth and the success of our State and Nation.

From providing input on the farm bill, to transportation legislation and Federal regulation affecting the farm and ranch community, including Endangered Species Act concerns, the Idaho Farm Bureau has helped ensure that Idaho producers' voice is heard in a broad array of local and Federal policy discussions. I have greatly valued