

Last year, 40 Catholic secondary schools were awarded the Excellence in Education Award, the nation's highest honor in education, by the U.S. Department of Education. In my home state, Boyland Catholic High School in Rockford, Illinois, was awarded the Excellence in Education Award for outstanding educational achievement.

Two students from St. Patrick School in Ottawa, Illinois, Justyna and Alexandra Ratajczak, wrote me about how much they enjoy going to Catholic school. Justyna wrote that St. Patrick School "is like a second home for me and I can not imagine my world without it." This girl's love of school testifies to the fact that Catholic schools are doing something right. Mr. President, I applaud Catholic schools and all their outstanding teachers for their high success rate among students and thank them for their important contribution to educating America's youth.●

TRIBUTE TO MR. BRAD PARKHURST, RECIPIENT OF THE 1998 MERRIMACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT'S AWARD

● Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge and commend Mr. Brad Parkhurst. Brad was recently awarded the President's Award from the Merrimack Chamber of Commerce.

Brad has worked at Public Service of New Hampshire since 1974. During that time, he has held positions in Generation, Distribution and Marketing. He has worked since 1981 in the Marketing Support Department developing innovative ideas to unique consumer situations.

Brad has illustrious credentials as a member of the Merrimack Chamber of Commerce. He serves on the Board of Directors, is Chairman for the "Swing into Spring" Consumer Expo and has solicited sponsors for Consumer Expos.

Brad is also very involved in professional organizations. He serves as Associate Member Director and Chairman of the Associates Council of the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of New Hampshire. He is a member of the Building and Association Planning Committees and the Manchester Area Home Builders Association. He received the "Associate of the Year" award from the Home Builders and Remodelers Association in 1994 and 1996. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Home Builders located in Washington, D.C.

Along with his professional credentials, Brad is also highly active in the community. He has been the treasurer of four non-profit organizations. He is an active member and Mission Director for the Merrimack Community Christian Church. He is the Director and Treasurer of Love Through Faith Ministries International, an organization that assists the poorest nations in the world. This past spring Brad and his

wife Roxanne led a team to Guinea-Bissau to spend two weeks teaching and training the local population.

Once again, I would like to congratulate Brad Parkhurst on receiving the President's Award from the Merrimack Chamber of Commerce. It is an honor to represent him in the United States Senate.●

HARTFORD JOB CORPS CENTER

● Mr. DODD. Mr. President, today I recognize Hartford, Connecticut's selection as a site for a Job Corps Center. The Department of Labor recently announced that Connecticut's capital city was one of four locations selected nationwide. Many years of planning have gone into Hartford's bid and the new Center enjoys the enthusiastic support of leaders in government, business, education and job training. The selection is testimony to the commitment of the Hartford community to our most disadvantaged young people, and that is why I endorsed the city's strong proposal.

In 1995, the Department of Labor had requested proposals for Job Corps Center sites and Hartford's joint application with the city of Bloomfield was regarded highly. Unfortunately, the funding for proposed new Centers was rescinded in the middle of the review process and no new Job Corps Centers were selected. But Hartford, Connecticut residents did not give up and the Department of Labor vowed to honor its commitment to new Centers in the future.

Hartford, Connecticut is a thriving business and cultural center, headquarters to major insurance and financial centers and home to renowned theater and art museums. It is situated on the banks of the historic Connecticut River which was heralded as an American Heritage River last year. Hartford is now embarking on a major waterfront residential, recreational and workplace development plan.

The city's overall unemployment rate is at 2.9 percent, but the unemployment rate for youth ages 16-19 is much higher. Despite Connecticut's economic recovery, too many young people are being left out of a job market that demands high-level skills. Hartford has many of the problems facing other large cities, including abandoned industrial sites, crumbling schools and double-digit high school dropout rates. At one Hartford high school, the dropout rate was more than 50 percent last year. That statistic is unacceptable and why I support the need for a Job Corp Center in Hartford. It will make a critical difference in the lives of so many at-risk youth.

Job Corps has been providing education and training for disadvantaged youth for more than 34 years. The program is so successful because it is a voluntary year-round program offering education, training and support services, including meals, child care and counseling. It maintains a zero tolerance for drugs and violence.

Hartford is poised to undergo an economic revitalization and the Job Corps Center is a true investment in our most under-served youth. The city of Hartford and the state of Connecticut have committed \$4 million toward the total development cost of \$11.5 million and the Hartford Housing authority is contributing the site, valued at \$420,000. The Center will be located on 12 acres in the Charter Oak Business Park being developed by the Housing Authority on the site of the former Charter Oak Terrace public housing project.

When completed in 2000, the Hartford center will serve more than 200 non-residential students each year in basic education and vocational training programs and provide on-site child care. Many organizations have pledged resources to ensure the success of the Center and most important of all, employers stand ready to hire young people who complete the Job Corps program.

Mr. President, I congratulate the City of Hartford and I commend the Department of Labor for their selection.●

WORK INCENTIVES IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

● Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today in support of legislation introduced last week by Senators JEFFORDS, KENNEDY, ROTH, and MOYNIHAN. I commend my colleagues for their dedication to improving the way federal programs serve persons with disabilities. Continuing my support for this effort from last Congress, I am glad to announce that I joined my colleagues as an original co-sponsor this year of S. 331, The Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999.

This bill addresses one of the great tragedies of our current disability system, a system that forces many people with disabilities to choose between working and maintaining access to necessary health benefits. This was never the intention of these programs. It is critical that we act now to overturn today's policies of disincentives towards work and replace them with thoughtful, targeted incentives that will enable many individuals with disabilities to return to work.

Over the years I have heard from Iowans who have been forced to leave the work force because of a disability. While they remain disabled and still require ongoing health benefits, they are eager to return to work. However, because of the risk of losing critical health benefits covered by Medicare and Medicaid, too many capable individuals are deterred from entering or re-entering the work force.

It is essential that our public disability programs encourage, not discourage, employment. This legislation tackles the risks and uncertainties disabled individuals face when trying to return to work. For individuals eligible for the Supplemental Security Income