

have to make choices about what is most important. Unfortunately, for many of us, our lives become a struggle to get the dollar to buy the foods to keep going, pay our property taxes for homes we cannot afford to sell, get the fuel to get us to the place to make that dollar which is worth less every day and employers cannot afford to pay more in wages and the cycle goes on and on.

Everyone says "Oh, let us just raise the minimum wage. That will fix it." Think again. The average small business man is one step away from sinking in this quicksand himself. He cannot afford health or dental insurance or retirement for him or his family, but he cannot have much of a business without employees, either. So he gives a raise to his employees and has to cut somewhere else, quality or quantity of goods sold and then the purchaser suffers. It all affects every one of us.

Transportation, fuel costs, value of the dollar, energy costs, making ends meet becomes increasingly difficult and our situations look increasingly dismal. Our society, like it or not, is tied to the umbilical cord of fuel oil pricing and something needs to be done to remove the grip on that cord that is choking out the life-giving fluids our nation needs to function. We need to control our own supplies of energy, provide for ourselves everything this nation needs to not just survive, but to thrive. We have oil supplies of our own under our own soil and off our own coasts; use them. That is what they are there for. As you use them, develop new sources, require more renewable energy implementation, but use what you've got. Stop letting the nation get the life strangled out of it. Make renewable energy more affordable, for one thing. It was going to cost me over \$40,000 to put in a wind generator to power my home. That would never ever pay for itself before it self destructed. It is ridiculous to have solar power and wind power devices so overpriced to make them unattainable. They would help the economy. Subsidize alternative energy and educate people on ways to stretch their dollar before it is too late.

Things are bad everywhere, but if we do not do something very soon, it is going to get much worse. Overcrowded, underfed, unhappy people, unable to care for their loved ones, will turn angry, bitter, and dangerous after years of being taught "me first philosophy." We have created a monster and that monster drinks crude oil. You better keep feeding it.

JANELE, *Hayden.*

Thanks for your interest in doing something about high gas prices. Here in Rexburg, I have found that at age 56, I can still ride a bike to work. I may even start doing groceries and other errands with my bike. I am getting in good shape, although I already was in good shape. My family and I find that we consolidate errands. Instead of going to town for one thing, we make sure it is for three or more things. If it is not, we just wait until we have more to do downtown or elsewhere. I have aging parents who need help, and gas prices have not made getting to their house very easy, but what we can do, we have to go. So we go without a lot of things. We pass by the treats and other not so important purchases (we were doing that before anyway). I think where this really hits us the hardest is in going to see our grandkids far away, or taking a simple trip like to Mt. Rushmore or even Yellowstone Park. The gas prices have eaten those options up pretty fast. It is too bad that we sit

around as a nation and let the oil rich countries dictate to us how we can live our lives. We should have started doing something about these fifty years ago, but apparently, nobody had that much far sight into the potential problem. We'll survive and we do not feel bad for ourselves, but it is not easy.

FERRON.

## ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

### TRIBUTE TO DEAN STONE

• Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, today marks the 84th birthday of Dean Stone, who has lived in my hometown of Maryville, TN, his entire life. This year also marks the 125th anniversary of The Daily Times, Maryville's hometown newspaper where Dean has worked for the last half century.

I extend my warmest wishes to both of these Maryville institutions, and ask that a letter I wrote to Dean be printed in the RECORD.

The material follows.

SEPTEMBER 10, 2008.

MR. DEAN STONE,  
*The Daily Times,*  
*Maryville, Tennessee.*

DEAR DEAN, It is an especially good idea to celebrate your birthday and that of The Daily Times all at once, because for me, and I am sure for most Blount Countians, it is hard to separate the two.

That was true when I was a Maryville High School student years ago and you hired me to contribute to the Times' school news page.

But it is even more true today because for the last half century I have so much enjoyed your photographs, your stories, and your opinions about Blount County. No one has ever done a better or more complete job of covering our families and communities.

Years from now, when anyone looks back to try to understand Blount County—its history, its people, and its mountains—the first place to go will be to a Dean Stone photograph of Cades Cove, or "Bits of stone" about some family, or a carefully reasoned editorial about why we should think now about what our county's landscape will look like later.

Happy birthday, Dean—and Maryville-Alcoa's The Daily Times—from a grateful former paperboy and school news correspondent.

Sincerely,

LAMAR ALEXANDER,  
*U.S. Senator.*•

### HEROES OF THE OREGON TRAIL FIRE

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, on August 25, 2008, Idahoans residing on the Boise bench in the area of the Oregon Trail and Columbia Village subdivisions experienced immense devastation caused by a brush fire that became a residential nightmare. With the combination of 50 m.p.h. winds, dry sage brush, high heat, sloped terrain and homes with cedar shake shingles and wooden decks, a small grassfire exploded, claiming the life of one woman, destroying 10 homes and causing exten-

sive damage to nine others. Mary Ellen Ryder, a professor at Boise State University, beloved wife of Peter Ryder and a friend to the community, was the single fatality. My thoughts and prayers and those of many Idahoans are with the Ryder family.

Although the fire caused great devastation, many lives and homes were saved because of the efforts of several courageous Idahoans. I would like to formally recognize one homeowner, two Boise police officers, one firefighter and one local humanitarian. Without their selfless service and personal sacrifices of physical safety, expense and time away from families and careers, the outcome and aftermath of the fire would have been much harder to endure. Thanks to homeowner Kent Hallamore, a survivor of the fire, my office gained key insight into the contributions of these five citizens.

The first Idahoan I would like to acknowledge is Rod Poe. When the fire reached Rod's subdivision, he quickly alerted neighbors and evacuated the surrounding homes. Even before emergency assistance arrived, Rod was hosing down houses within the fire's path and putting out new blazes as they emerged. He stayed on the scene for the entire night and for many subsequent evenings inspecting the area for hot spots and patrolling for looters. His leadership in the community extended beyond physical service. He comforted the suffering, acquired household goods for those who had none, and contacted Boise's mayor to discuss future fire prevention solutions for the bench area.

Like Poe, officers Jason Rose and Chris Davis of the Boise Police Department were among the first to begin working at the location of the fire. These two men ran door-to-door urging residents to leave their homes. As homes ignited, the inferno-like conditions worsened and took their toll on the men. Their clothing caught fire; their vision blurred; and both suffered from smoke inhalation. Yet they faced these risks with valor, persisted in their duties and saved the lives of many residents.

Firefighter Charlie Ruffing is the sole coordinator of the Firefighters Burn-out Fund, a collection fund for the immediate needs of fire victims. In the aftermath of the Oregon Trail Fire, Ruffing responded on his personal cell phone around the clock. He worked diligently to collect cash and household goods and distribute them. To date, he has collected over \$110,000 in cash and gift-card donations. He displayed tremendous compassion and individual care for each family he assisted. He exceeded his responsibilities and earned the trust and respect of those he sought to assist.

Finally, Pattie Wagstaff organized an assistance network and coordinated a community donation event which

amassed even more personal and household goods than the fire victims needed. Since the coordinator of her church's disaster relief program was among the victims of the fire, Wagstaff heroically filled the void. Taking 2 weeks off from her job to help in the relief efforts, Wagstaff quickly came to play an integral part in helping the affected families begin to return to normal life. Her presence inspired many during times of great shock and emotional upheaval.

Many hands played valuable roles in quelling the flames and caring for the people who survived the Oregon Trail Fire. To these five individuals and members of the Boise Police and Fire Departments as well as the others who so selflessly served their community, I join with family, friends and neighbors to offer my sincere gratitude.●

#### TRIBUTE TO ROBERT FISCH AND EUGENE LANSING

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I would like to share with my colleagues a remarkable story of generosity and public spiritedness.

Twenty years ago, in October 1988, I opened an official office in Dubuque in order to better serve people in that part of Iowa. Almost immediately, two wonderful citizens—Robert Fisch and Eugene Lansing—came forward to be of service to me and to the staffers in my new Dubuque office.

Both of them were retired Army veterans. Bob, who was 67 at the time, was a veteran of World War II. Gene, who was 57, was a veteran of the Korean war.

We eagerly accepted their offers of assistance. But little did we know that this initial act of kindness and generosity would extend for another two decades.

Over the years, Bob and Gene have been faithful friends and valued helping hands to my Dubuque staff. They have pitched in answering phones, taking messages, and helping out with many of the mundane but necessary tasks that keep an office running efficiently.

Bob usually comes into the office twice a week. Gene comes in once a week, driving 50 miles round trip from his home in Dyersville.

They have given their time and energy. But they have given much more: their wisdom and experience, their enthusiasm, and their amazing generosity of spirit. Bob Fisch and Gene Lansing are outstanding examples of the old saying that "you don't have to be on the public payroll to be an outstanding public servant."

Bob Fisch, after leaving the Army, worked for 42 years at Dubuque Packing Company and 14 years at the 4th Street Elevator. He is involved in many civic and volunteer organizations, and he founded an organization

of community activists called the 11th Street Neighborhood Group. He and his beloved wife Marion, who died in 1999, were married for half a century. They have five adult children—four daughters and one son.

Gene Lansing and his wife, Marvel, have been married for 36 years. They have two sons and one daughter. After the Korean war, Gene worked on a tanker on the Great Lakes for 10 years, then went on to work at Wickes Lumber and, later, in the Dubuque City Parks Department. He is active in his church, Trinity Lutheran. He is also active in American Legion Post 136, the Disabled American Veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Mr. President, as you can imagine, Bob Fisch and Gene Lansing have become dear friends to my Dubuque staff over the years. I have gotten to know them, as well, and I have tremendous respect and admiration for both of them. That is why I wanted to take this opportunity, here in the Senate, to salute these two exceptional Iowans. I want to publicly thank them for two decades of selfless service to my staff and me, and to the people of Iowa.●

#### FORT DODGE COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Fort Dodge Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts between everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Fort Dodge Community School District received a 1999 Harkin grant totaling \$750,000 which it used to help build Butler Elementary School. This school is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school dis-

trict. Indeed, it is the kind of school facility that every child in America deserves. The district also received a 2005 fire safety grant totaling \$100,000 to upgrade fire alarms systems at Riverside, Cooper and Feelhaver Schools.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Fort Dodge Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Stuart Cochrane, Jerry Schnurr, Janice Merz, Brian Forsythe, Craig Jarrard, Bill Kent and Kevin Rogers and former board members Steve Schwendeman, Ernest Kersten, Clark Fletcher, Jeri Green, Dennis Milefchick and Steve Lindeberg. I would also like to recognize superintendent Linda Brock, former superintendent Dr. David Haggard, former Butler principal Jerry Spittal, business manager Jack Christensen, director of operations Chris Darling and former director of operations Sherwood Johnson.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Fort Dodge Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

#### HINTON COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Hinton Community School District, and to report on