

leadership of the board of education, president Harm Eggena III, vice president Angie Johnson, Bea Volk, Tim Trettin, and Wendy Fullerton, and former members, Rick Demaray, Scott Woodruff, Gary O'Connor, Terri Engels, Ann Sullivan, Bill Dolan, Lisa Paulus, and Pat Rooney. I would also like to recognize superintendent Steve Ward, former superintendent Gary Schwartz, director of buildings and grounds Norm Kelly, board secretary Janice Kuhlers, Neil Fullerton, and Neil Wedeking.

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 Rudd-Rockford-Marble Rock 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.●

WEST DES MOINES 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 West Des Moines 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—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 West Des Moines Community School District received two Harkin fire safety grants totaling \$332,011 which it used to make fire safety repairs at the Walnut Creek Campus and at Fairmeadows Elementary School. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

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 West Des Moines Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Mark Lyons, vice president Terry Tobin, Barbara Burnett, Jill Hansen, Susan Moritz, Tom Suckow, and H. Milton Cole, and former board members Jim Aipperspach, Jane Fogg, Curt Lack, Pete Leo, John Paule, Jeanne Taylor, John Ambrosio, Gretchen Tegeler, and Deb Thomas. I would also like to recognize superintendent Tom Narak, former superintendent Les Omotani, former associate superintendent Galen Howsare.

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RETIREMENT OF LYNN CARPENTER

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, today I recognize and commend the service of Lynn Carpenter of South Dakota. Mr. Carpenter is retiring from the Depart-

ment of Veterans Affairs after over 34 years of honorable service to the agency.

Lynn began his career with the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1974 after serving with the United States Army for 2 years. He continued his service in the National Guard for 18 more years, retiring in 2005. Lynn has served in various positions within the VA system, most recently as the Veterans Service Center Manager at the Sioux Falls VA Regional Office.

During his tenure with the VA, Lynn has been an invaluable resource for veterans and their families. He has provided important counsel and advice to VA officials, veterans service officers and congressional members and their staff on a range of issues. Throughout his time with the VA, he has seen many changes in the system and was able to address the ever changing needs and concerns of veterans and their families.

I have appreciated Lynn's willingness to take the time to answer questions and concerns from my staff members. I commend his dedication and commitment to making sure every veteran's case or question was always handled in a timely manner. Lynn can take great pride in his work during his Federal service career. In his retirement, he will spend more time fishing at his lake home in Big Stone. I wish Lynn, his wife Debbie, and their family all the best in retirement. It is with great honor that I share his impressive accomplishments with my colleagues, and I thank him for his service to this Nation and its veterans.●

BLUE WATER CREEK MASSACRE

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, today I wish to speak in regards to the Blue Water Creek Massacre of 1855. On September 3, 1855, while camped near the Blue Water Creek in present day Nebraska, a group of Lakota were attacked by COL William S. Harney and his troops. According to Army records, 86 Lakota were killed and 70 captured. The Battle of Blue Water Creek is also known as the Battle of Ash Hollow or the Harney Massacre according to the Nebraska State Historical Society, which maintains a historical marker, along U.S. 26, 1½ miles west of Lewellen, NE.

There are several historical accounts of what transpired that day in 1855 and the Little Thunder Tiospaye contacted me because they seek to commemorate and to preserve for future generations the history surrounding Mni To Wakpala—Blue Water Creek. They are the direct lineal descendants of Wakinyan Cikala—Little Thunder—a man who was amongst the leaders of that Lakota camp destroyed 153 years ago. Additional leaders who survived that morning include Iron Shell, Spotted Tail, and Red Leaf, each of whom