

Remarks by Senator Tom Harkin
To the Iowa Community Foundations
and Philanthropy Academy
Ames, Iowa
March 29, 2004

GOOD MORNING. THANK YOU, MARK [Hamilton, CVC Board Chair], FOR THAT KIND INTRODUCTION. MARK WE ARE ALL INDEBTED TO YOU – AND ALSO TO MARK EDELMAN AND RICK MORAIN – FOR PROVIDING THE VISION AND LEADERSHIP THAT HAVE REALLY PROPELLED THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS MOVEMENT HERE IN IOWA. YOU ARE DOING GREAT WORK – IMPORTANT WORK!

FOR ME, PERSONALLY, IT'S A THRILL TO SEE THE BIG THINGS THAT YOU PEOPLE HAVE DONE WITH THE MODEST EARMARKS I HAVE BEEN PUTTING IN THE AG APPROPRIATIONS BILLS. CVC HAS BEEN WORKING

CLOSELY WITH MY STAFF, AND I WANT THAT STRONG,
SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIP TO CONTINUE INTO THE
FUTURE.

WORKING ON THE FARM BILL IN 2002, I DID
EVERYTHING I COULD TO DIRECT FUNDING AND
RESOURCES TOWARD RURAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT. IT BEARS REMEMBERING THAT THE
OFFICIAL TITLE OF THAT BILL WAS THE FARM
SECURITY AND RURAL INVESTMENT ACT. IT INCLUDED
EVERYTHING FROM RURAL BROADBAND INCENTIVES . .
. . . . TO INCREASED VALUE-ADDED GRANTS
EQUITY FINANCING LOANS FOR RURAL SMALL
BUSINESSES AND FARMERS, AND MUCH MORE.

THESE ARE VALUABLE INITIATIVES. BUT YOU
AND I ARE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS: WASHINGTON AND
DES MOINES DO NOT HAVE ANY MAGICAL SOLUTION
TO THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACING SMALL

TOWNS AND RURAL COMMUNITIES. THE REAL KEY TO RURAL REVITALIZATION IS GOING TO BE OUR SUCCESS IN ENCOURAGING LOCAL LEADERSHIP, LOCAL TEAMWORK, AND HOME-GROWN SOLUTIONS. AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THE CVC IS ALL ABOUT.

THAT'S ALSO WHY I AM SUCH AN ENTHUSIASTIC ADVOCATE OF COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS. THEY ARE THE PERFECT VEHICLE FOR BRINGING TOGETHER LOCAL FINANCING, LOCAL BRAINPOWER, AND LOCAL LEADERSHIP TO FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS TAILORED TO A GIVEN COMMUNITY OR GROUP OF COMMUNITIES. THE AIM IS TO IMPROVE BOTH THE ECONOMIC CONDITION AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE, BECAUSE THESE TWO THINGS ARE INTERTWINED.

WE ALL KNOW THAT RURAL IOWA IS IN SERIOUS ECONOMIC TROUBLE. AS ISOLATED

INDIVIDUALS – ON FAR-FLUNG FARMS AND IN VERY SMALL TOWNS -- FOLKS TEND TO THROW UP THEIR HANDS AND SAY, “THE PROBLEMS ARE TOO BIG. IT’S HOPELESS. I CAN’T MAKE A DIFFERENCE.” AND IF PEOPLE STAY ISOLATED AND FRAGMENTED, THIS BECOMES A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY.

AND THAT’S WHY LOCAL PEOPLE NEED TO COME TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITYTO POOL THEIR TALENTS AND RESOURCES AND THINKING.

THE TOWN OF MANNING IN WESTERN CARROLL COUNTY HAS BECOME A KIND OF “POSTER CHILD” FOR THE AMAZING THINGS THAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN A COMMUNITY GETS ITS ACT TOGETHERAND LEARNS TO ACT TOGETHER.

IN THE 1980S, MANNING’S ECONOMY WAS HAMMERED BY THE WHOLE RANGE OF WOES THAT ARE ALL TO FAMILIAR TO US: FAILING FARMS THE

CLOSING OF A MAJOR MANUFACTURING PLANT
SHOPS AND STORES GOING OUT OF BUSINESS ON MAIN
STREET.

BUT LEADERS AND CITIZENS IN MANNING
DECIDED TO GET UP OFF THE MAT – TO TAKE CHARGE
OF THEIR OWN DESTINY. AND THE VEHICLE FOR THAT
TURN-AROUND WAS THE MANNING BETTERMENT
FOUNDATIONS. IT PROVIDED LEADERSHIP. IT CAME UP
WITH A GAME PLAN FOR REVIVAL. AND IT SET ABOUT
AGGRESSIVELY RAISING PRIVATE FUNDS.

AND THE MANNING BETTERMENT
FOUNDATION DID SOMETHING ELSE: IT GAVE PEOPLE
HOPE. REMEMBER WHAT IT SAYS IN THE BOOK OF
PROVERBS: “WHERE THERE IS NO VISION, THE PEOPLE
PERISH.” WELL, MANNING’S FOUNDATION GAVE
PEOPLE A VISION A CREDIBLE VISION FOR THEIR

COMMUNITY'S FUTURE. AND THIS WAS JUST
INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT.

CITIZENS IN MANNING RESPONDED WITH
EXTRAORDINARY GENEROSITY – GIVING MONEY,
DONATING MATERIALS, VOLUNTEERING THEIR LABOR.
THE MANNING BETTERMENT FOUNDATION HAS
ORCHESTRATED AN IMPRESSIVE ARRAY OF PROJECTS,
INCLUDING NEW AQUACULTURE SITES, A \$51 MILLION
ETHANOL PLANT, EXPANSION OF THE MANNING
REGIONAL HEALTHCARE CENTER, INSTALLATION OF
FIBER-OPTIC CABLE, A NEW CHILD CARE CENTER, AND
ON AND ON. TODAY, MANNING IS ONCE AGAIN A
THRIVING COMMUNITY.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT, HERE IN THE EARLY
YEARS OF THE 21ST CENTURY, RURAL IOWA IS
UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO HELP ITSELF. OUR
POPULATION IS AGING AND – AS YOU WILL BE

LEARNING LATER THIS MORNING -- WE ARE IN THE EARLY STAGES OF A VAST INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSFER OF WEALTH.

MEMBERS OF THE SO-CALLED “GREATEST GENERATION” – PEOPLE WHO CAME OF AGE DURING WORLD WAR II -- ARE PASSING ON THEIR FARMS AND FINANCIAL ASSETS TO THE NEXT GENERATION. ONE STUDY FOUND THAT RURAL IOWANS POSSESS SOME \$200 *BILLION* IN ASSETS -- AND A LARGE SHARE IS IN THE HANDS OF IOWANS AGE 65 OR OLDER.

THESE FARMERS AND BUSINESSPEOPLE ARE GETTING ON IN YEARS. BUT THEY STILL CARE DEEPLY ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITIES, THEIR RURAL WAY OF LIFE, AND THE INSTITUTION OF THE FAMILY FARM. MANY WOULD BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO GIVE A GENEROUS SHARE OF THEIR WEALTH BACK TO THEIR

COMMUNITIES – IF THEY HAD A CREDIBLE AGENCY TO MAKE GOOD USE OF THE GIFT.

AND THAT’S EXACTLY THE ROLE THAT COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS CAN PLAY. THEY OFFER LEADERSHIP VISION AND A BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE. AND, AS I SAID, THEY GIVE HOPE THAT WE CAN PRESERVE OUR SMALL TOWNS AS THRIVING COMMUNITIES – PLACES THAT OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN WILL NOT WANT TO LEAVE.

ANOTHER STRENGTH OF COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS IS THAT EACH ONE IS TAILORED TO LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND LOCAL NEEDS. IN ONE TOWN, THE FOUNDATION MIGHT FOCUS ON OUTREACH TO ATTRACT NEW SMALL BUSINESSES OR MANUFACTURING. IN ANOTHER TOWN, THE FOCUS MIGHT BE ON SOCIAL IMPROVEMENTS SUCH AS A NEW DAY-CARE CENTER, A SENIOR HOME, OR PHYSICAL

FITNESS FACILITY. BUT THE COMMON DENOMINATOR IS THAT DECISION-MAKING, INITIATIVE, AND RESPONSIBILITY REMAIN IN LOCAL HANDS. THIS IS ABOUT EACH COMMUNITY TAKING CHARGE OF ITS OWN DESTINY.

SO I PRIZE THE INDEPENDENCE OF COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS. HOWEVER, I ALSO BELIEVE THAT STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD PLAY A ROLE IN JUMPSTARTING AND MENTORING FOUNDATIONS. THAT'S WHAT WE DID IN 2002, WHEN POSITIVELY IOWA, ISU EXTENSION AND OTHERS USED MY EARMARK GRANT TO CREATE THE COMMUNITY VITALITY CENTER.

ANOTHER BOOST CAME LAST YEAR, WHEN GOV. VILSACK SIGNED INTO LAW THE "ENDOW IOWA" INITIATIVE. THE GOAL IS TO KEEP DOLLARS AND CITIZENS IN IOWA BY GIVING PEOPLE INCENTIVES TO

CREATE AND DONATE TO REGIONAL FOUNDATIONS. AS MOST OF YOU KNOW, ENDOW IOWA PROVIDES A 20 PERCENT TAX CREDIT -- UP TO A \$100,000 MAXIMUM -- FOR TAXPAYER'S WHO DONATE TO A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION. COMMUNITIES CAN APPLY FOR \$25,000 IN MATCHING STATE FUNDS IF THEY CREATE A FOUNDATION

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT DOZENS OF COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS ARE ALREADY UP AND RUNNING HERE IN IOWA AND IN NEIGHBORING STATES. IN WORKSHOPS, THIS AFTERNOON, YOU'LL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FOUNDATIONS IN MANNING, FAIRFIELD, DUBUQUE, AND WATERLOO/CEDAR FALLS. IN EACH CASE, THE FOUNDATION HAS KICK-STARTED A LOCAL ECONOMIC REBOUND. AND IT HAS GIVEN CITIZENS A VEHICLE FOR GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY THEY LOVE.

ONE LAST THOUGHT: IT STRIKES ME THAT
COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS HARNESS THE SAME
STRENGTHS AND VIRTUES THAT SUSTAINED IOWA’S
PIONEER ANCESTORS: SELF-RELIANCE SWEAT
COOPERATION THE STRENGTH OF NEIGHBORS
A SPIRIT THAT REFUSES TO GIVE IN TO HARSH
CIRCUMSTANCES.

I AM CONVINCED THAT FOUNDATIONS CAN BE
THE CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION IN
EACH OF OUR COMMUNITIES. THEY OFFER A VISION.
THEY OFFER HOPE. THEY ALLOW US TO TAKE THE
OFFENSIVE IN THE FIGHT FOR IOWA’S FUTURE.

SO THANK YOU, MY FRIENDS, FOR YOUR
LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITIES ALL ACROSS IOWA.
THANKS FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK. HAVE A GREAT
“ACADEMY” TODAY – AND A SAFE TRIP HOME, THIS
AFTERNOON.