

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST TO AWARD AN HONORARY DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS DEGREE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa to award an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree to the Honorable Tom Harkin at Spring 2015 or Fall 2015 Commencement.

Executive Summary: The University of Northern Iowa wishes to recognize Senator Harkin for his outstanding leadership and dedicated public service as a member of Congress and the U.S. Senate representing the state of Iowa.

Details on Senator Harkin's Accomplishments:

- ◇ Senator Harkin was born in Cummings, Iowa, the son of an Iowa coal miner and a Slovenian immigrant. He graduated from Iowa State University and the Catholic University of American's Columbus School of Law. He served in the United States Navy as an active-duty jet pilot from 1962-1967.
- ◇ Senator Harkin was first elected to Congress in 1974, representing the Fifth District. After 10 years of service, he was elected to the Senate in 1984, serving until his retirement after completing his fifth term in 2015.
- ◇ He has a long history of commitment to civil rights, social justice, and education. His goal has been to "strengthen the ladder of opportunity provided by our government."¹ His life's work certainly affirms that commitment.
- ◇ A signature achievement has been Senator Harkin's introduction and ultimate passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Influenced by his brother who was deaf, Senator Harkin delivered part of his speech in sign language. The Act has brought about major changes in accessibility regarding buildings and the workplace.
- ◇ Senator Harkin has had a major influence on education in his dual roles as Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Appropriations Subcommittee.
- ◇ He has been a strong advocate for quality education from birth through adulthood, supporting early childhood education, high quality K-12 education, access and affordability of higher education, and programs for job training. Funding for child care, Head Start, special education, and K-12 education, as well as student financial aid and health research, all increased under his leadership.
- ◇ Senator Harkin has been a strong leader in agriculture, with past service as Chair of the Agriculture Committee and Chair of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. He had key roles in writing two Farm Bills, particularly in programs shaping conservation, rural development, and food/nutrition policies. The 2002 Farm Bill included policies promoting renewable energy and biobased products for the first time.

¹ A LETTER FROM TOM, "A Ladder of Opportunity for *Everyone*."
<http://www.harkin.senate.gov.letterfromtom.cfm>.

- ◇ Recently, Senator Harkin was instrumental when the University of Northern Iowa received a \$77,000 grant from the USDA Rural Development Grant Program for the Iowa Waste Reduction Center. This grant will help educate landfill operators across the state on using composting for food wastes.
- ◇ Senator Harkin's commitment to human rights has extended globally in his work to expose and prevent child labor abuses.
- ◇ The University of Northern Iowa wishes to recognize Senator Harkin's extraordinary accomplishments² with an honorary degree.

² For a complete record of his legacy, see: <http://www.harkin.senate.gov/priorities.cfm>.