



Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) once stated, “Education is the key to success in this country. It has the ability to transform an individual's life and give them opportunities above and beyond the generations that came before them. Every American should have a chance at an outstanding, well-rounded education.” Indeed, education transformed Senator Harkin’s life, and as a result, he has tirelessly worked to guarantee that each American has access to a quality education.

Senator Harkin attended Iowa State University on a Navy ROTC scholarship, earning a degree in government and economics. He actively served the Navy as a jet pilot for 5 years after graduation. In 1969 Senator Harkin accompanied Congressman Neal Smith to South Vietnam, where he independently investigated and photographed the plight of political prisoners. *Life* magazine published those images resulting in the release of hundreds of abused prisoners.

Once stateside, Senator Harkin continued to be an advocate for the oppressed. Before being elected in 1974 to Iowa’s Fifth Congressional District, he worked with Legal Aid, assisting low-income Iowans who could not afford legal help. Senator Harkin served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 10 years before challenging, and ousting, the incumbent senator.

Senator Harkin continued to commit to bettering the lives of others with groundbreaking legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. As a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee (which he chaired from 2009), Senator Harkin has led efforts to modernize America’s school infrastructure, reduce class size, increase access to computers and the Internet, expand career counseling for students, and provide professional development for educators and administrators.

After a 40-year commitment to a life of public service, Senator Harkin, announced that he will not run for reelection in 2014. Although he undoubtedly will be missed on the Hill, his thoughtful, impactful legislation to better the lives of people everywhere will serve as his legacy to the American public. Senator Harkin is being recognized as NAPE’s Public Policy Legislator of the Year because he embodies the best in what a government leader should be—compassionate, capable, caring, and above all committed—to ensure that every American has the opportunity to achieve the American dream. Thank you for your service, Senator Harkin.