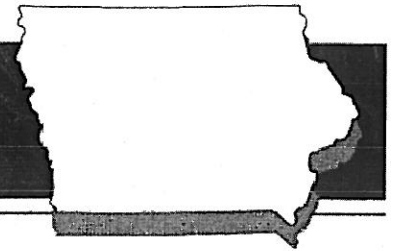


U.S. Senator

TOM HARKIN OF IOWA



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Opening Statement by Senator Tom Harkin *as Prepared*
On the Senate Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Hearing on National Institutes of Health
July 16, 2008

“Good morning, and welcome to today’s Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee hearing on the fiscal year 2009 budget for the National Institutes of Health.

“Last year, you’ll recall that this subcommittee held six hearings on NIH, during which we heard from the directors of every Institute and Center. I enjoyed those hearings immensely, and I’m sorry we weren’t able to bring everyone back this year. I promise we’ll do it again in 2009. In the meantime, I’m pleased that several Institute directors were able to attend this hearing, and I’m looking forward to an excellent discussion.

“Before we begin, I want to take a moment to thank Dr. Collins for his extraordinary service as the director of the National Human Genome Research Institute. Dr. Collins has been teaching me about genomics since 1993, when he first came to NIH, and I like to think there were times, during those 15 years, when I almost understood what he was saying.

“In fact, that’s one of the things I admire most about Dr. Collins. As brilliant as he is, he never talks down to his audience. He can converse as easily with the layman as with the Nobel Prize winner. In all the years that I’ve known him, I never ended a conversation with him without feeling smarter and more hopeful about the future.

“I think that quality helps explain why he was so successful in leading the Human Genome Project, an effort that I believe will go down in history as one of mankind’s greatest achievements. It also served him well during his 13-year crusade to pass the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, which finally became law in May. They call that law “GINA” for short. I think they should have named it “Francis.”

“This will be Dr. Collins’ final appearance before the subcommittee as director of the Genome Institute, but I strongly suspect we will see him here again in some other capacity, once he decides where and how he will apply his talents next. Until then, Francis, thank you for all you’ve done, at NIH and throughout your career, to help improve people’s lives. You will be greatly missed.