

**Remarks of Senator Patrick Leahy
Announcement of \$375,000 CNCS grant to the
Patrick and Marcelle Leahy Center for Rural Students at Lyndon State College
September 4, 2015**

Good afternoon, and thank you President Bertolino, AmeriCorps members and the Lyndon community for inviting me here today. For years, Lyndon has been instrumental in expanding the economic vitality of the Kingdom and opportunities for Vermont's first-generation students.

I am pleased to stand with you to announce the selection of the Patrick and Marcelle Leahy Center for Rural Students to receive \$375,000 from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to implement the Lyndon Economic Opportunity Attainment Program (LEAP). I am proud of this partnership with Lyndon State College to broaden services in the Northeast Kingdom.

I am also proud that this grant represents part of a \$1 million investment in educational opportunities for Vermont's students. Today we also celebrate the University of Vermont Center for Disability and Inclusion, the Vermont Higher Education Consortium and Vermont State Colleges – all of whom make a commitment each day to support the next generation of Vermonters.

In 2009, I obtained funding for the Patrick and Marcelle Leahy Center for Rural Students to support first-in-family students. We recognized at that time, as we do today, that there is something special about growing up in rural Vermont and also, many special obstacles to overcome. The Leahy Center has since become a unique resource; offering advising, job training, and tools for improving paths forward for students in our rural communities. The LEAP initiative will not only provide Lyndon students with these crucial tools, but also spread support throughout the greater community.

For 20 years, AmeriCorps volunteers in the Northeast Kingdom have both inspired our youth and enhanced the economic livelihood of the region. The promise of this partnership with the Leahy Center is in promoting economic sustainability, and creating a brighter future for our children and grandchildren.

Community service encourages cross-neighborhood connection, while expanding health, nutrition, and educational services in underserved regions. Service also allows us to explore new interests and gain valuable skills for a successful career. For many of our students, we know that college is not enough to secure a job – it takes real life experience. I have heard from many Vermonters who have chosen to stay here as a result of their time in AmeriCorps.

Today's announcement marks the commitment of Lyndon to continue leading the charge in building opportunities for our students. I look forward to welcoming our new volunteers, and I thank them for their tremendous contribution to the vibrancy of Vermont's culture and economy.

Thank you again for inviting me to share in this tremendous win for Lyndon State College, the Patrick and Marcelle Leahy Center for Rural Students, and the Northeast Kingdom.

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