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IOWA GOVERNOR TERRY BRANSTAD PARTNERS WITH OPPORTUNITY NATION AND LOCAL LEADERS TO DECLARE FEBRUARY 'OPPORTUNITY IN IOWA MONTH'

*Governor issues proclamation encouraging all Iowans to help take action
to reinvigorate the American Dream*

Iowa Governor Terry Branstad today became the first governor in the nation to issue a proclamation declaring an official 'opportunity' month on the calendar. The proclamation, signed today in the Governor's office, establishes the month of February as 'Opportunity in Iowa' month, a time to harness and promote the best and brightest ideas from our public and private organizations in advancing opportunity in Iowa. It also encourages all Iowans and businesses to conduct one or more activities that enhance access to the American Dream in Iowa.

"As Governor of the great State of Iowa, I recognize that the pursuit of 'opportunity' is a core Iowa value, whether it be for an individual, family, agency, company or governmental agency," Governor Branstad said.

"Increasingly in the U.S., the greatest determinate of your ultimate success is becoming the zip code you're born in, rather than the hard work you put in," said Mark Edwards, executive director of Opportunity Nation. "This notion is certainly not reflective of the American Dream that our parents taught us about. If each American can't reach his or her potential, as a nation, we can't reach ours. That's why Opportunity Nation is working to develop a cross-partisan, cross-sector, and shared plan to restore opportunity in America. We commend Governor Branstad for his leadership today in proclaiming February as 'Opportunity in Iowa' month and hope that other governors will follow his inspirational example."

Edwards, along with local leaders Rob Denson, President of Des Moines Area Community College, and J. Barry Griswell, CEO of the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines and retired Chairman, President and CEO of The Principal Financial Group, joined Governor Branstad at the signing ceremony today. Denson and Griswell were part of an Iowa delegation that helped launch Opportunity Nation in New York last November and continue to be active members of the campaign through their Leadership Council.

"Many of us are the successful products of the opportunities that have been afforded to us throughout our lives," said Denson. "There is no shortage of success that can be reached when provided the right opportunities, and it's important that we ensure that every American have the tools needed to achieve their ultimate potential."

Griswell added: "Sometimes in life an idea, a concept or even a movement totally captures your attention. The Opportunity Nation movement is doing just that with thousands of us who believe that making the American Dream a possibility for all Americans is one of our highest priorities. I am proud to be joining Governor Branstad, Rob and Mark in bringing this movement to Iowa."

Today's event is the first in a series of regional events being convened by Opportunity Nation's Higher Education Council, an inclusive group of colleges and universities that each have committed to holding an opportunity event on their campus in 2012 that pushes opportunity and the American Dream to the forefront of their community's discussions. In addition, the president of each campus is serving on the Opportunity Nation Leadership Council, where they are using their leadership position as a platform to facilitate discussions about local and regional actions that can be taken to improve opportunity in their communities.

To learn more about Opportunity Nation and the steps they are taking to develop a shared plan to restore opportunity in America, please visit www.opportunitynation.org.

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Opportunity Nation is a cross-partisan national campaign to promote opportunity, social mobility, and access to the American Dream. The campaign has built a broad coalition of nearly 200 businesses, non-profits, corporate partners, faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and military groups to help create and advocate for a shared, cross-partisan plan that will provide better skills, more quality jobs, and healthier communities to all Americans. For more information please visit www.OpportunityNation.org and check us out on Twitter @oppnation and on Facebook at OpportunityNation.