

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING THE LIFE OF OTHA DILL "O.D." JACKSON

HON. MICHAEL GUEST

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. GUEST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Otha Dill "O.D." Jackson. O.D. Jackson passed away on October 26, 2024, in Kosciusko, Mississippi, at 99 years old. He left behind a legacy filled with sacrifice and service to his country, state, and community, a legacy that all Americans should strive to leave behind.

O.D. was a devout Christian and member of First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Mississippi. He served as a ruling elder for many years and was a longtime member of the choir. The members of First Presbyterian Church were well served and blessed under O.D.'s leadership.

At eighteen years old, O.D. answered the call and volunteered to enlist in the army on June 29, 1943. O.D. with 10,000 soldiers and 1,000 nurses arrived in New Guinea where he was sent to the Admiralty Islands as a rifleman and truck driver. While there, O.D. participated in the invasion of Leyte and Luzon. Later in the Battle of Manila, O.D. was injured by a Japanese sniper and discharged later that year.

O.D.'s service to his country and community continued when he returned to Mississippi. O.D. graduated from the School of Animal Husbandry at Mississippi State University despite lacking a high school diploma. O.D. taught at various schools making a difference in many students' lives.

O.D. held many community leadership positions. He helped form the Neshoba County Republican Party and sat as its chairman for four years. He was as a member of the Mississippi Republican Party State Executive Committee and served as a delegate to four Mississippi Republican State Conventions.

Mr. Speaker. I am thankful for the opportunity to memorialize the life and legacy of Otha Dill Jackson. O.D. made an impact on the lives of his community, state, and country. His impact will have a lasting effect on generations to come. His passing will be felt by many.

HONORING THE OSCAR SMITH HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM ON THEIR STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Oscar Smith High School Football Team from Chesapeake, Virginia on becoming the Virginia High School League's Class 6 State Champions.

On Saturday, December 14, 2024, the Oscar Smith Tigers won the championship game with a score of 21–20 against the James Madison Warhawks. Including their most recent win in 2021 against James Madison High School, Oscar Smith has now won five state championships since 2008. Led by Coach Chris Scott for the third season, the Tigers won this state title following an accomplished year. Oscar Smith ended the season undefeated, with a record of 15 wins and 0 losses.

Throughout the game, the Tigers and Warhawks fought tooth and nail to gain an advantage over the other team. The fourth quarter had the Oscar Smith Tigers down 14–7, with little time left in the game. Following two consecutive touchdowns by the Tigers, the Warhawks scored a touchdown and were trailing at 21–20. After opting to go for the 2-point conversion, James Madison's pass fell incomplete, crowning the Oscar Smith Tigers as the state champions. The determination from the young athletes of Oscar Smith High School is an inspiration to every athlete in our community and a testament to their hard work throughout the season.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to congratulate the Oscar Smith High School Football Team. I would also like to thank Coach Scott, the parents, and the entire Oscar Smith High School community for the support they have shown these athletes throughout an incredible season. I wish them the best in their future pursuits, and I wish their football program continued success.

CELEBRATING ABIGAIL SHEPHERD

HON. ZACHARY NUNN

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. NUNN of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the incredible service of Abigail Shepherd to the people of the Iowa Third District.

Abby's service to the people of Iowa is reflected in every family she welcomed to Washington, D.C., every constituent concern she helped address through her casework collaboration, every veteran who received the medals they earned, and the smiles on the face of every Iowan she hosted on her late-night Capitol tours.

Her incredible mother, a small Iowa business owner and childcare provider, and her father, the sheriff of Union County, should be proud to know that her work in D.C. makes a real difference. Her service to Iowans made lives better, and her teamwork in our office was critical to our success. I thank Abby, and watch the lead foot when driving the Kia downtown.

RECOGNIZING GEORGE LELAND'S SERVICE TO HIS FAMILY AND TO THE NATION

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate George Leland on the occasion of his 100th birthday. His dedication to his family, community and Nation is worthy of commendation.

George's service in the war began when he hitchhiked from his home in Detroit to Selfridge Air National Guard Base on his 18th birthday and enlisted. Having lost an uncle in the First World War, he was well aware of the danger of serving in the armed forces. He was placed with the U.S. Army Air Force, 12th Air Force, 460th Bomb Group who were stationed in Spinazzola, Italy from 1943 to 1945. George was the nose gunner in a B–24 bomber named "The Yugo Kid" because they would almost always fly over Yugoslavia on their bombing runs. As the nose gunner, George was responsible for spotting the enemy fighters and shooting them down before they shot you. George was quite good at his job, and his team flew 28 missions over Europe without being shot down. The constant stress and lack of consistent rations wore on him, as he enlisted at 168 pounds and was discharged at 128 pounds.

After the war, George married his wife, Delores, in 1947 and took a job at The Detroit News. They moved to Garden City in 1953 "when everyone on the block was a WWII veteran" and he still lives in the same home. Together they had 5 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. Delores sadly passed in 2019 after 72 years of marriage. George has stayed well involved with the veteran's community as a part of his local VFW, American Legion, and the Disabled American Veterans. In retirement, George is a champion maker of homemade pickles. Every year he grows his own cucumbers and makes his own pickles using "Mrs. Wages" spices.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in honoring the incredible life of George Leland, a man who served our country during its darkest hours and who has continued to bring joy to others. A dedicated husband, father, and grandfather, he faithfully served his family and Nation with a sense of duty, respect, and integrity. We thank him for his service and wish him the happiest of birthdays. I thank George.

RECOGNIZING MAJOR ERIC HAPNER

HON. ROBERT B. ADERHOLT

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to recognize Major Eric Hapner. He has

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

dutifully served this Nation with exemplary dedication as an Army Congressional Fellow and Congressional Budget Liaison for the Assistant Secretary of the Army in the office of Financial Management and Comptroller.

Major Hapner recently left Capitol Hill to continue his service to our Nation and America's Army National Guard as the Legislative Liaison for the Adjutant General of Nevada.

After growing up in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Hillsboro, Ohio, Major Hapner attended Miami University in Ohio where he earned his bachelor's degree in business and a minor in political science.

Initially enlisting in the Army National Guard as an infantryman, Major Hapner's first deployment was in support of Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts. In 2008, Major Hapner was commissioned as an aviation officer, attended flight school at Fort Novosel in Alabama to pilot the UH-60 Blackhawk, and distinguished himself as the Honor Graduate.

Major Hapner has served in a broad range of assignments during his Army career. He was the Assistant Operations officer and a Platoon leader in Alpha Company during his first Middle East deployment.

In 2015, he deployed with the Ohio and Colorado National Guards to Iraq as the Air Mission Officer in Command. In 2016, he was assigned as the Aviation Task Force Executive Officer in Illersheim, Germany.

Recently, Major Hapner served as the Deputy Executive Officer to the Director of the Air National Guard, National Guard Bureau at the Pentagon. Eric's last flying position was as a UH-60 pilot in command where he led multinational aviation missions with Middle Eastern and European allies.

In addition to his Army assignments, Eric graduated from the University of Colorado Law School in 2017. During law school, Eric pursued his passion of public service through multiple law clinics and internships ranging from county prosecutors to the Army JAG Corps and the Colorado Supreme Court. Additionally, Eric worked for Colorado State Senator Owen Hill, ultimately becoming his Chief of Staff.

In 2022, I had the privilege of working with Major Hapner in my office for the people of Alabama's Fourth Congressional District, where he served as an Army Congressional Fellow.

We continued working together during his subsequent assignment as a Congressional Budget Liaison for the U.S. Army. Major Hapner worked tirelessly with Members of Congress and their staff to accurately articulate the Army's budget priorities.

His professionalism, his integrity, and his commitment to the mission are unmatched, and his work ethic enabled him to successfully represent the U.S. Army and the Department of Defense in Congress.

Those lucky enough to travel with Eric to visit Army installations came to appreciate his profound insight, meticulous planning, and sage advice. Whatever journey you embark upon, there are few more reassuring sights than Eric sitting next to you.

No one knows this better than his family. Eric is a devoted husband to his wife, Hakela, who is currently attending law school at the McGeorge Law School in Sacramento, California. Eric met Hakela here on Capitol Hill and married in 2022.

Major Hapner's commitment to service and care for others permeates every organization

and activity he participates in. Moreover, he exemplifies servant leadership for individuals in the Army and their communities to emulate.

Throughout his career, Major Hapner has positively impacted Soldiers, peers, and superiors. Our country has benefited tremendously from his extraordinary leadership, judgment, and passion.

I applaud Major Hapner for the job well done, and I hope that my colleagues in the House of Representatives will join me in wishing him and his family the very best in their future Army assignments and beyond.

HONORING DALE ANDERSON

HON. DOUG LAMBORN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the leadership, service, and dedication of Dale Anderson to the 5th Congressional District of Colorado. For eighteen years, Dale Anderson has served on my Congressional staff in many roles, each marked by a distinguished pursuit of excellence and service to the Pikes Peak region with personal integrity, sacrifice, and loyalty.

Dale was born in Independence, Missouri where he was raised by devout Christian parents. After graduating from high school, Dale served in the United States Army for nine years where he developed his passion for the care of veterans. Following his time in the Army, Dale graduated from University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. Almost immediately after my election, Dale joined my staff as a Military and Veterans Affairs Liaison. In that role, he advocated on behalf of countless veterans, active-duty military members, and their families, to numerous federal agencies. His work also included helping establish the PFC Floyd K. Lindstrom Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic in Colorado Springs. Dale went on to serve as the District Director where he was responsible for coordinating all events, outreach, and constituent services strategy for 5th Congressional District.

Dale was particularly adept at connecting with community leaders, mentoring the staffers under his command, building a team that reflected my values, effectively and compassionately serving our constituents, and faithfully representing me in the district. Keeping his finger on the pulse of the district and being proactive to meet the district's needs are some of Dale's many strong points, and one that he excellently performed throughout his time as District Director. In 2018, Dale became my Chief of Staff, bringing to D.C. his extensive experience and knowledge of the district to accurately and purposefully lead my combined staff in service of our constituents.

One of my early campaign promises was to establish a National Cemetery to provide a final resting place for our Nation's bravest heroes. The 10-year journey that culminated in establishing the Pikes Peak National Cemetery was at times arduous and difficult. Throughout the process, Dale was instrumental in building momentum, keeping morale high, and strategically crafting the plan which ultimately insured that the Pikes Peak region was able to honor our Nation's finest—including Dale's father, Mr. Gary Anderson.

Perhaps the most pivotal moment in recent memory for the 5th Congressional District came in 2023 when it was announced that U.S. Space Command was to be permanently based in Colorado Springs. This basing decision was the culmination of years of work, much of it led by Dale Anderson. Dale was vital in organizing a combined and unified advocacy campaign which reinforced the principle that any basing decision should be made only with national security in mind. In addition, Dale ensured that my office was proactive in speaking out about the importance of U.S. Space Command being based in Colorado Springs, as well as utilizing media outlets, legislative measures and processes, and high-profile meetings. These steps ensured that national security and the 5th Congressional District were kept at the forefront of every piece of the decision-making process.

The Black Forest fire in 2013 was one of the most devastating natural disasters in the Pikes Peak region. The fire killed 2 people, burned over 500 homes, and destroyed over 14,000 acres of land. While the destruction was immense, without the determination and persistence of Dale Anderson, I fear that the damage to life and property could have been worse. I directed Dale to call the National Inter-Agency Fire Center to coordinate getting the nearest firefighting planes in the air to help fight the fire. Dale immediately jumped into action, staying up through the night to ensure that our community was taken care of, and every resource was deployed to save as many lives as possible. Dale's actions that day and in the crucial days following proved that his connections, know-how, and persistence were invaluable assets in a time of crisis.

Many of these same qualities of his were also evident in how our office provided help in the wake of the destructive Waldo Canyon Fire of 2012.

Dale and his wife Jennie live in Colorado Springs and continue to put the 5th Congressional District before themselves in everything that they do. I would also like to thank Jennie, who gave her unwavering support for her husband, without which he could not have been as effective in his service to the district. Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating, honoring, and celebrating the eighteen years of dedicated service by My Chief of Staff, Dale Anderson, to the 5th Congressional District of Colorado and to the Nation.

HONORING CHERI WILLIAMS FOR HER SERVICE TO WASHINGTON'S SIXTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

HON. DEREK KILMER

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the extraordinary career of Cheri Williams—and to give my sincere thanks to her for serving as Director of Constituent Services on my team.

For over three decades, Cheri has devoted her life to helping Washingtonians. In fact, thousands of folks back in my neck of the woods have had their problems with the federal government solved by Cheri and her dedicated team. Cheri has worked to ensure that

every person in our region who reached out was treated fairly by the federal government. Over the years, she has been vital to a simple mission—make government work better for the people. But that was more than a tagline. It led to real impacts for real people.

She helped seniors get access to Social Security and Medicaid so they could retire with dignity. She helped shipyard workers and other public servants resolve issues with their benefits and pensions to ensure they could get what they've earned. She helped reunite families and ensure immigrants in our country could continue to contribute meaningfully to the fabric of our society. She helped newlyweds go on their honeymoon when they didn't realize they didn't have an up-to-date passport. She helped small businesses get access to federal funding to get back on their feet during and after the pandemic. She helped veterans get the benefits and recognition that they deserve for their extraordinary service.

Cheri is not only known in every corner of our district; she is loved in every corner of our district. And there's a very simple reason.

It's because Cheri Williams is a difference-maker.

I am so grateful to her for being a part of my team, a mentor to members of our team, and the definition of a public servant. As I complete my time in office, I want to commend Cheri and her family for all that they have committed to our community. And I want to thank Cheri for her service to folks in our region and to making life better for Washingtonians.

I thank Cheri, on behalf of the people of Washington's Sixth District.

CONGRATULATING ST. BERNARDS HEALTHCARE ON ITS 125TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. ERIC A. "RICK" CRAWFORD

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. CRAWFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of St. Bernards Healthcare, which celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2025. St. Bernards, based in Jonesboro, Arkansas, began caring for patients in 1900, in response to a malaria fever epidemic. A group of Olivetan Benedictine Sisters received a request to care for the sick, and they purchased a six-room house to be converted into a hospital. That house is now a hospital that stands as a 454-bed regional medical center, the largest of its kind in eastern Arkansas and southeast Missouri. Every year, 625,000 patients across 23 counties depend on St. Bernards's 100 locations and more than 4,700 team members to provide exceptional care.

St. Bernards strives to uphold the mission set by its founding Sisters, who still sponsor it today—"to provide Christ-like healing to the community through education, treatment, and health services."

Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating St. Bernards Healthcare's 125th anniversary.

CELEBRATING STEPHEN PECK

HON. TED LIEU

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. LIEU. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Stephen Peck, a Marine Corps Veteran and non-profit leader who has dedicated his career to serving his fellow veterans. After 28 years of service, 14 years in which he led the organization, Stephen is retiring as Chief Executive Officer of U.S. VETS, an organization dedicated to preventing and ending veteran homelessness nationwide. Stephen leaves a lasting legacy as a veteran leader who has devoted his efforts to empower veterans and families through housing, comprehensive services and advocacy.

Born in 1946 to Greta Kukkonen and actor Gregory Peck in Los Angeles, Stephen grew up in Southern California and went on to graduate from Northwestern University. After graduation, he was drafted into the United States Marine Corps, serving as a First Lieutenant in the 1st Marine Division and forward observer outside Danang during the Vietnam War.

After completing his service in Vietnam, Stephen returned home, attended the graduate film school at the University of Southern California and worked on a number of television shows and became a documentary filmmaker. After making *Heart of the Warrior*, a documentary about Vietnam War and Soviet-Afghanistan War veterans returning to the countries they fought in and *Far From Home*, a documentary about homeless veterans in Venice, California, Stephen returned to USC and earned a master's degree in social work.

While completing his degree, Stephen began working as a social worker at the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center, assisting his fellow veterans. Stephen found his true passion in this work and in 1996, he joined the United States Veterans Initiative, a non-profit that provides homeless veterans with temporary housing, counseling and wrap-around services. In 2010, Stephen was named CEO of U.S. VETS, expanding the organization's work in several states. During his leadership, the organization has grown tremendously, and offers services to veterans across Southern California, Hawaii, Arizona, Nevada, Texas and Washington, D.C.

After the West Los Angeles Leasing Act was signed into law, giving the Department of Veterans Affairs the authority to develop supportive housing and services for homeless veterans, U.S. VETS was selected by the VA as part of the principal developer team for the site. Dedicated to ending veteran homelessness in Southern California, this project co-led by U.S. VETS is building new supportive housing for veterans, social work and community space and at its full build out will house a minimum of 1,200 units of supportive housing and a community dedicated to veterans in Los Angeles County. In 2023, the Congressional Medal of Honor Society awarded U.S. VETS with its Community Service Award for demonstrating the values epitomized by the Medal of Honor.

Stephen's decades of service to our veterans returning from combat, are commendable and his work to help house and support them has reverberated in Southern California and beyond. I am confident that his work will

continue to benefit veterans throughout our Nation and will inspire others to continue the fight to finally end veteran homelessness in our country.

HONORING THE PHOEBUS HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM ON THEIR STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Phoebus High School Football Team from Hampton, Virginia on becoming the Virginia High School League's Class 4 State Champions.

The Phoebus Phantoms won the Class 4 state championship game against the Varina High School Blue Devils with a score of 23-6. This is the fourth year in a row Phoebus High School has claimed a state championship title following two consecutive victories in the Class 3 division. Led by Coach Jeremy Blunt, the championship makes the Phoebus Class of 2025 the second to win four state titles in a row, or "4 peat," and its 49 consecutive wins are only three short of the 2012 class, which also won four state crowns from 2008 to 2011. Phoebus High School closed the season undefeated, with a record of 14 wins and 0 losses.

The Phantoms scored first with a field goal, but the Blue Devils scored the first touchdown, taking a 6-3 lead. The Phantoms had not trailed their opponents for much of the 2024 season, but sophomore Quarterback Maurikus Banks ended the Blue Devils' lead when he threw a 54-yard touchdown pass to Romeir Smith for a 9-6 halftime lead. The Phantoms defense shut out Varina for the rest of the game. Offensive Lineman Markus Hopson recovered a fumble into the end zone and gave the Phantoms a 16-6 lead and then Banks added a rushing touchdown for the final score of 23-6.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to congratulate the Phoebus High School Football Team and thank Coach Blunt, the parents, and the entire Phoebus High School community for supporting these students throughout this remarkable season and now a second "4 peat" in school history with their state championship win. They have made all of us incredibly proud. I wish them the best in their future endeavors, and I wish the program continued success.

HONORING THE LIFE OF HERSH GOLDBERG-POLIN

HON. ABIGAIL DAVIS SPANBERGER

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Ms. SPANBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of love, light, and peace that Hersh Goldberg-Polin built throughout his 23 years of life.

Hersh was a loving son, devoted brother, and beloved friend to many. He was born on October 3, 2000 to Rachel Goldberg and Jon Polin, and he was the loving older brother to

sisters Leebie and Orly. Hersh grew up to be a curious and intelligent young man. His family lived in Richmond, Virginia—where they and Hersh were devoted community members, known for their kindness and love of learning—before eventually settling down in Jerusalem, Israel where Hersh spent his formative years.

Hersh was enthusiastic about his love for soccer and especially enjoyed cheering on the Hapoel Jerusalem Football Club. He used his passion for soccer to help his community as a member of the Malha Brigade, the team's official fan club. As a member of the club, he participated in community events and advocated for unity through an initiative to bring Israeli and Palestinian children together through a common love for soccer. His room displayed a sign that reads "Jerusalem is for everyone" in English, Hebrew, and Arabic.

At the age of 18, he fulfilled his duty and served as part of the Israel Defense Forces. While he fulfilled different duties during his time of service, he enjoyed being a medic most—helping and healing others. He concluded his service honorably in April 2023.

His love for people and for learning grew as he traveled the world. After a summer trip across Europe, Hersh returned to Israel and attended the Nova desert rave on October 7, 2023, where attendees were attacked by terrorists. Hersh lost his arm during this attack while trying to protect and help others—always a caring and loving friend to all. Hersh was captured, held hostage for nearly a year, and was tragically murdered by Hamas terrorists. Yet throughout the 320 days he was held hostage, it was the image of his joyful eyes and his broad smile that brought continued attention and a global focus to the plight of the hostages and the need for the world to prioritize their return.

As we—here in the halls of Congress and across our country—remember the tragedy of the day that stole Hersh from his family and friends and ultimately took him from this world, we also celebrate the joy and kindness he brought to everyone he touched throughout his 23 years. We honor the young man who became known to the world for his extraordinary compassion, joyful spirit, and ultimately his bravery. We mourn with his family—his beloved parents and sisters—and friends, and we also join them in honoring his extraordinary life. I know each of his loved ones will carry on his legacy by continuing his work—by promoting peace, charity, and love. May his memory be a blessing.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring the remarkable life and legacy built by Hersh Goldberg-Polin. To his family, friends, and loved ones—may the memories of love and light that were built with Hersh bring them peace and comfort as they honor his life in years to come.

RECOGNIZING THE PLANT CITY FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT

HON. LAUREL M. LEE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Ms. LEE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Plant City's Firefighters, a group of incredible individuals who have dedi-

cated their lives to serve our community, as they celebrate the swearing-in of new firefighters and the Plant City Firefighter of the Year.

Congratulations to Cameron Hall, John Furlow, and Christian Torres on earning their badge as the newest members of the Plant City Fire Department. Becoming a firefighter requires immense courage, dedication, and a willingness to put others before oneself. I look forward to seeing the great impact they will have on our community.

I would like to extend my congratulations to Captain Jason Mesa, who has been named Plant City's Firefighter of the Year. Captain Mesa's ability to lead by example, particularly during the most challenging times, is a testament to his remarkable character and service. I thank him for everything he does to keep Plant City safe.

I salute Battalion Chief James Wingo for his 30 years of unwavering service in the Department. Thirty years is an exceptional achievement—I thank him for his service.

Lastly, I extend my deepest appreciation to all the men and women of the Plant City Fire Department. They are the first responders we turn to when disaster strikes, and they show up, without hesitation. During Hurricane Milton, we saw the true extent of their dedication, as they worked tirelessly to protect our residents, secure our neighborhoods, and help our community. On behalf of the people of Florida's 15th District, I want to thank them.

I thank them for their service, their sacrifices, and their unwavering commitment to our community.

HONORING TRACY DISCHERT VERNER

HON. CORI BUSH

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Ms. BUSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, along with the people of St. Louis, in recognition of the outstanding work of Tracy Dischert Verner, a dedicated advocate for equity and financial inclusion in Missouri's First District. Through her tireless efforts, Tracy has sought to dismantle the systemic barriers that have long impeded many St. Louisans from accessing the banking services they need to achieve financial stability and security.

Tracy's work within the banking system has focused on increasing access to financial tools that are essential for building generational wealth. She has been a champion for those who have been historically excluded and marginalized, developing innovative programs that serve those with the greatest need in our community.

Through her leadership, Tracy has expanded access to vital financial services for thousands of St. Louisans, including providing access to direct deposit for thousands of young workers, which enables them to participate more fully in the economy. She has established college savings accounts for thousands of students in St. Louis Public Schools, helping to ensure that higher education remains an attainable goal for the next generation. She has partnered with workforce development agencies, recidivism programs, crisis intervention services, and emergency shelters

to provide comprehensive banking solutions to individuals in transition, including unhoused individuals and women in crisis. Throughout her work, she has ensured that individuals who have been justice-involved have the tools they need to rebuild their financial futures and re-enter the workforce with confidence.

Tracy Dischert Verner's service has had a profound and lasting impact on Missouri's First District. Her unwavering commitment to equity, economic empowerment, and justice has transformed countless lives. As we honor her achievements, let us also carry forward her vision of a community where no one is left behind, and where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Tracy's legacy is a reminder that meaningful change is possible when we dedicate ourselves to uplifting others, and we are forever grateful for her extraordinary contributions.

CELEBRATING THOMAS RAY DIX'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

HON. GUY RESCHENTHALER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate Thomas Ray Dix, a World War II veteran, who will turn 100 years old on December 26, 2024.

In 1943, Mr. Dix enlisted in the Navy and attained the rank of a Motor Machinist's Mate Second Class. He was sent to the Pacific Theater where he served aboard the USS *Hemminger* (DE 746). Mr. Dix participated in several missions, trained submarines for war patrols, and engaged in antisubmarine operations. In the Pacific Theater, the USS *Hemminger* (DE 746) supported the search for Lieutenant General Millard F. Harmon and escorted supplies during the Battle of Okinawa.

Thereafter, Mr. Dix served on the USS *Minivet* (AM-371). In October 1945, he arrived in Japan to sweep sea lanes for mines leftover from the war. On December 29, 1945, the ship struck a mine and began sinking, but thankfully, Mr. Dix survived and returned home to his family.

Following his honorable military service, Mr. Dix returned to southwestern Pennsylvania to start his career and continue his public service. He stayed active in the Normalville Veterans of Foreign Wars club, where he often recalled heroic stories of his service in World War II. In 1963, Mr. Dix became the co-owner of Anchor Cement Block Works, where he ran the company with his brother, Edwin Dale Dix. He became a Deacon at the Indian Head Church of God and served on the Donegal School Board in Westmoreland County. Mr. Dix remains active in many community organizations, including the VFW, and lives in the home he built with his late wife, Valetta, 70 years ago. He is an important member of our community, and we thank him for his years of service to our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the House join me in celebrating a true American hero, Mr. Thomas Ray Dix, on his 100th birthday.

COMMENDING SECRETARY OMER OSMAN FOR 35 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

HON. DARIN LaHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor and congratulate Omer Osman on his retirement from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) after 35 years of service to the people of Illinois.

Secretary Omer Osman was born in Kerma, Sudan, the son of Zumrawi and Fatima Osman. He was the fourth of eleven children, all receiving a college education. Osman received his bachelor's degree in engineering from Southern University followed by his master's degree in engineering from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois.

Beginning as a civil engineering trainee in Peoria, Osman quickly ascended to the position of District Bureau Chief of Operations, followed by Region 5 Engineer, Chief Engineer, Director of Highways, and Deputy Secretary. On June 1, 2019, he was confirmed as the Secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation, the thirteenth person to hold that title and the first person of color.

In his capacity as Secretary of Transportation, Osman had the responsibility for oversight of 80 airports, an expansive waterway infrastructure, 300,000 miles of roads and bridges, and a railroad system that transports 25 percent of the country's freight passing through Illinois.

Secretary Osman is credited by the Administration with increasing diversity at all levels of the Department of Transportation, as well as improving access to department partnerships for minority and female owned businesses.

Secretary Osman's accomplishments during his tenure leading the Illinois Department of Transportation include, but are not limited to, the new Mississippi River Bridge and Route 24 widening, relocation of Illinois Route 3 in East St. Louis, the Interstate 74 Mississippi River Bridge in the Quad Cities, the interstate 74/155 interchange reconstruction in Morton, the Interstate 74 Murray Baker Bridge, the Illinois Route 13 expansion between Carbondale and Interstate 57 in Marion, and the rehabilitation of the US 150 Illinois River Bridge in Peoria.

Secretary Omer Osman will forever be known as one of Peoria's greatest public servants. It is my privilege to congratulate him on his retirement and we wish him, his wife Dr. Magda Osman, sons Khalid and Waleed, and daughter Nadeen the best in the future.

HONORING RICK RICKER, A DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER

HON. CLAY HIGGINS

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Richard Everett Ricker, a dear friend and brother. Rick Ricker was a legend in Louisiana, and he was kind enough to give

me a job when I very much needed one in 1984. Rick Ricker became like a father to me through the years, and our friendship was unbreakable. Honestly Mr. Speaker, I don't believe I would be standing before you today as a Congressional servant to We the People, if Rick Ricker had not guided me through some of the darkest periods of my life. For the last forty years, Rick has always been there for me. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Rick introduced me to my wife Becca almost twenty years ago. I just cannot fully explain how much Rick has meant to me and my family.

Rick Ricker was a fighter, and he waged a valiant battle to the very last minute of his life, but Rick has gone home to the Lord.

Rick loved golf, and Harley Davidson motorcycles, and fast cars. He drank and laughed and loved life. Rick Ricker lived, Mr. Speaker. He lived an edge of life that most men will never understand, and I can say without doubt that he dearly loved his family. He was so, so proud of his sons and the men that they became, he gave me a thousand updates on them through the years. If pure love is a measure of a man's struggle to be a good father, Rick Ricker set a shining example, because he made it very clear how much he admired and loved his sons. When Rick's wife died, many years ago, he was injured in his heart in a way that changed him forever. Rick and I have just been through so much together. When my father died in August of 1989, I called only two men that night, and one of them was Rick. I cried with him, and he comforted me the way only a loving father can.

Richard E. Wicker is survived by his two sons, Brent and Brian; four grandchildren, Amber, Isaiah, Kaleb, and Elora Ricker; three brothers, Fred, Peter, and Jim; one sister, Peggy, and a multitude of nieces and nephews. The virtue and success of his family today will forever mirror the love that Rick had for them.

I will miss Rick terribly as my brother. I am prayerful that we will meet again in the kingdom. Lord Jesus, please hold Rick close and cover him with your grace.

MOURNING THE LOSS OF GENE "THE PUMPKIN MAN" RHODES

HON. BILL HUIZENGA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. HUIZENGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mourn the loss of a true Southwest Michigan icon, Gene "The Pumpkin Man" Rhodes. As the owner and operator of a local family farm in Kalamazoo County for more than 60 years, customers could count on Gene not just for their fall pumpkins, but also for countless memories with family and friends.

Inspired by his late wife Carol, Gene transformed his family farm into the pumpkin-themed destination it is today. He was well-known for his orange dress shirt, tucked into his orange slacks, held up by his orange suspenders, and perhaps most notably, his orange 2005 Cadillac with the license plate "Pumman." Visitors to the farm would also be greeted by pumpkin-themed furniture, decorations, and even a pumpkin-headed man and his wife. It was Gene's passion and light-

hearted spirit that helped make visits to the Pumpkin Patch special for so many.

As a Michigan Centennial Farm, the Rhodes farm has been in Gene's family since 1885. The farm has continuously sold pumpkins since 1957 and now produces hundreds of tons of pumpkins each year.

For many in Southwest Michigan, Halloween meant a visit to Gene the Pumpkin Man. Gene provided cherished memories and experiences to families spanning generations, leaving behind a rich legacy. He will be truly missed.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating the life of Southwest Michigan's most famous pumpkin farmer: Mr. Gene Rhodes, the Pumpkin Man.

HONORING THE 400TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF MATA GUJRI JI

HON. THOMAS R. SUOZZI

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. SUOZZI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 400th birth anniversary of Mata Gujri Ji, who in 1704, at age 81, was the first female Sikh civil rights activist to face imprisonment, torture, and execution, all for the sake of liberty. Sikhs around the world celebrate her life during the Safar-E-Shahadat—the last week of December—which is the holiest week for Sikhs. As a member of the Sikh Caucus, I join the worldwide Sikh community in recognizing this important quadricentennial anniversary.

Mata Gujri Ji was the mother of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, and the wife of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji. When Guru Gobind Singh Ji was nine years old, the monarchy of that time started clamping down on religious freedom and civil liberties. Guru Teg Bahadur Ji stood up to the monarchy's oppression and, as a result, faced imprisonment. Mata Gujri Ji stood by his side and encouraged him to continue fighting for freedom.

Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was given an ultimatum. He could either abandon his struggle against the monarchy or face execution. Mata Gujri Ji and Guru Gobind Singh Ji encouraged Guru Teg Bahadur Ji not to abandon his principles. Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was later executed.

Mata Gujri Ji continued to fight for civil liberty as she raised Guru Gobind Singh Ji. She was a pillar of strength for the Sikhs of her time and many from around the world sought her advice. Mata Gujri Ji taught Sikh women that they should be both kind and courageous.

In December 1704, the monarchy imprisoned her and her younger grandchildren, 9-year-old Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and 7-year-old Baba Fateh Singh Ji. They were kept in the Thanda Bud, or the cold tower, where government officials went to escape the hot Indian summers. That month, the Thanda Burj reached deadly freezing temperatures. Mata Gujri and her grandsons were not given food, water, or warm clothing and endured daily torture.

During their time in the cold tower, a devotee named Moti Mehra Ji bribed prison guards to sneak in warm milk for Mata Gujri Ji and her grandsons. Once the regime discovered this, Moti Mehra Ji's entire family was publicly executed.

During their imprisonment, Mata Gujri Ji reminded her grandsons about the bravery of their grandfather and their duty to remain courageous in the face of cruelty. Mata Gujri and her grandsons refused the government's attempts to bribe them, and as a result, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh Ji were sentenced to death by suffocation in a brick wall.

While Mata Gujri Ji was in prison with her younger grandsons, her older two grandsons, and 40 Sikhs, also gave their lives fighting tyranny at Chamkaur Sahib. They faced a brutal winter and constant hunger, yet refused to surrender their struggle for liberty. Each year, Sikhs gather at Gurudwara Fatehgarh Sahib in Sirhind, India, for the Safar-e-Shahadat Smagam, founded by Giani Harpal Singh Ji, to find inspiration by sitting in the thanda burj, where Mata Gujri and her grandsons once sat, and listening to accounts of their bravery.

Mata Gujri Ji gave her life defending the right for others to be treated with dignity. Her steadfast courage in the face of darkness remains an inspiration for all those who stand for freedom. Today, the Third Congressional District of New York joins the Sikh community in honoring Mata Gujri Ji and all of the brave sacrifices which took place during the Safar-E-Shahadat.

**HONORING THE SERVICE OF NEW
ULM CITY COUNCILOR LES
SCHULTZ**

HON. BRAD FINSTAD

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. FINSTAD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the service of Les Schultz, a friend, neighbor, and public servant who is retiring this week after sixteen years of service on the New Ulm City Council.

Since his election in 2008, Les has faithfully represented the people of New Ulm's Ward 3. Throughout his four terms, he has served as a strong voice for the City of New Ulm on numerous boards and committees, most notably the city's Economic Development Authority.

Les is currently the longest-serving member of the New Ulm City Council, and has dedicated countless hours to improving the city we call home. He was instrumental in projects like soliciting community input for new welcome signs for the city, and the completion of the New Ulm dog park—both of which will continue to benefit our community for many years to come.

This week, Les attended his final city council meeting, closing the book on his longtime service to the City of New Ulm. I congratulate Les, on his well-deserved retirement, and I wish him and his family the best in this next chapter.

**RECOGNIZING LLOYD RICE'S SERV-
ICE TO THE NATION AND HIS
FAMILY**

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Lloyd Rice, a resident of Michigan,

on the occasion of his 100th birthday. His dedication to his family, community, and Nation is worthy of commendation.

Lloyd was born in Green County, Indiana, and moved to Jackson, Michigan, at the age of 16. The following year, he was leaving a movie theatre when he heard the news that America had been attacked at Pearl Harbor. He graduated from Jackson High School in 1943 and received his draft notice in the mail the day of his graduation.

Lloyd joined the Navy and became a diesel mechanic for a destroyer escort that patrolled the Atlantic for German submarines. Many of their missions included escorting ships carrying troops and supplies across the ocean, deterring the enemy submarines that prowled the area. These efforts were part of a continuous 18-month patrol in the Atlantic. After the deployment, Lloyd returned on leave to the United States, and then deployed on a ship headed for the Pacific when they received word that the Japanese had surrendered.

After the war, Lloyd became a carpenter and played a major role in the post-war manufacturing boom of his community, taking part in the building of 15 schools and being the foreman on 3 of them. He married his first love, Dorothy, in 1947, and had two children. Sadly she succumbed to her battle with cancer in 1962. A couple years later, Lloyd met his last love, Evelyn, and they married in 1965, and had 2 children. They were married 67 years until Evelyn passed in 2022. After recovering from heart surgery in his early 70s, Lloyd started working again at his local Home Depot for 19 years, before retiring again at the well-seasoned age of 96.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in honoring the lifetime of service that Lloyd Rice has been so kind to share with us. After serving his country as a young man, he spent the rest of his life building schools, churches, and houses in order to make his communities more welcoming and prosperous for all. We thank him for his service and wish him the happiest birthdays. I thank Lloyd.

**RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL CER-
TIFIED DIETARY MANAGERS
(CDM), CERTIFIED FOOD PROTEC-
TION PROFESSIONALS (CFPP)
DAY**

HON. JENNIFER A. KIGGANS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mrs. KIGGANS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the National Certified Dietary Managers (CDM), Certified Food Protection Professionals (CFPP) Day, which this year fell on November 28, 2024. This day is meant to honor the contributions these professionals have made in the food service management profession and the lives they have impacted through their service in America's healthcare industry.

I would also like to recognize the Association of Nutrition & Foodservice Professionals (ANFP) for their efforts to designate November 28, National CDM, CFPP Day. Over 90 percent of the ANFP's more than 13,000 members work in healthcare and a majority of those are in long-term care facilities. As a geriatric nurse practitioner, I have seen first-

hand the way in which CDMs and CFPPs positively affect health outcomes for members of our greatest generation.

They play an essential role in America's healthcare industry, and as such are responsible for managing nutrition and food service operations. They are trained and qualified to administer menus, food purchasing and preparation, and to apply nutrition principles, among many other essential tasks. The CDM, CFPP credential is also the basis for the ANFP Youth Apprenticeship Program, which was approved by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2022.

This year it was especially fitting that the National CDM, CFPP Day fell on Thanksgiving, as CDMs and CFPPs work 365 days a year to serve their patients. It is an honor to celebrate these dedicated professionals who work tirelessly, even over the holidays, away from their friends and families and loved ones.

I am proud to honor their significant impacts to healthcare and celebrate the National Certified Dietary Managers, Certified Food Protection Professionals Day of the Year.

**COMMEMORATING THE
MATTHEWS-VU MEDICAL GROUP**

HON. DOUG LAMBORN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate and celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Matthews-Vu Medical Group in Colorado Springs, led by Doctor Richard Vu and his wife Doctor Shabnum Matthews-Vu. The Matthews-Vu Medical Group has served the Pikes Peak region with a focus on the underserved in our community, offering many low-cost medical solutions for those most vulnerable.

Dr. Vu was born in Vietnam and moved to the United States as a young boy with his mother and siblings, living in Chicago near his father. The circumstances of his upbringing instilled in him a hard work ethic and desire to serve those around him who are underserved, especially those on welfare and receiving governmental aid.

Dr. Vu and Dr. Matthews-Vu, who grew up in East Meadows, New York, met at Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago, where they both received their medical degrees. Dr. Vu completed his residency in Internal Medicine at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago, while Dr. Matthews-Vu completed her residency in Pediatrics at the University of Chicago. After residency, the couple first lived in Arizona and then moved to Colorado Springs in 2004 with their family, they began their medical practice shortly after the move.

Originally founded with only two and a half physicians and a small and modest office in 2004, the Matthews-Vu Medical Group has grown to over sixty providers in five locations with a broad range of specialties and medical skills. Specializing in serving our community and patients who are on government plans such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Tricare, the Matthews-Vu Medical Group has become a beacon of help for those in our community who need affordable medical care that is provided with an intentionally caring and loving heart.

This commitment to the individual and family of every patient is evident in the way both Dr. Vu and Dr. Matthews-Vu live their lives and have raised their family. The love they share for each other and their family is obvious in the way they interact with each other and every patient. They are most attentive to their patients and prioritize their needs above everything else. Their passion for medical excellence and patient service is driven by their mission statement: "Providing the highest quality of compassionate care for patients from all walks of life." Dr. Vu and his team ensure that everyone who walks through their door, regardless of their background or financial means, will get the medical care they need and deserve.

In 2020 the Matthews-Vu Medical Group opened their own processing center to process COVID-19 tests, prioritizing speed, accuracy, and service to our community in the midst of the pandemic. Their processing center allowed many other businesses in the community, including medical and dental, to remain open during the pandemic.

Dr. Vu and Dr. Matthews-Vu have three children. Their family continues to exemplify the love of Jesus Christ to everyone around them. Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues in Congress join me in honoring and celebrating the Matthews-Vu Medical Group and Dr. Richard Vu and Dr. Shabnum Matthews-Vu for their dedicated and Christ honoring service to the Pikes Peak region.

HONORING ERIN HANNIGAN UPON HER RETIREMENT

HON. JOHN GARAMENDI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, along with Representative MIKE THOMPSON to recognize and honor Erin Hannigan on the occasion of her retirement after an illustrious career of public service, leadership, and commitment to the Vallejo, Solano County communities and beyond. Erin is a lifelong resident of Solano County and a proud member of the Vallejo community. Her dedication and service have left a profound and lasting impact on those around her.

Throughout her career, Erin held numerous significant roles that enriched her community. Her journey in public service began as a member of the Vallejo Community Development Commission, where she played a key role in distributing Community Development Block Grant funds to benefit neighborhoods and organizations in Vallejo. In 2004, she facilitated the relocation of a national insurance company's call center to the Vallejo Waterfront, creating 220 local jobs.

In 2007, Erin was elected to the Vallejo City Council, where she guided the city through challenging economic times with resilience and a balanced approach to addressing budget deficits. She championed critical initiatives to improve quality of life, including revising commercial truck routes, introducing the Chronic Nuisance Ordinance, and supporting smoke-free city parks.

Erin's commitment to public service continued when she was elected to the Solano County Board of Supervisors, representing

District 1 in November 2012. Sworn into office in January 2013, Supervisor Hannigan worked tirelessly to bridge the services and operations of the County with the community. Her leadership focused on public safety, homelessness, human trafficking, health care, and environmental sustainability.

One of Erin's hallmark achievements is her partnership with the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, which has contributed an extraordinary \$7.75 million over eight years to assist those in need in Solano County. This partnership has supported a robust collection of programs, including First 5 Solano, which provides critical basic needs support to families in crisis and funds initiatives in early learning, school readiness, social engagement, and community resource information at the First 5 Center in Vallejo.

Erin Hannigan's legacy is one of integrity, leadership, and dedicated service to her community. Her tireless efforts and unwavering commitment have left an indelible mark on Solano County and serve as an enduring inspiration to all who had the privilege of working with her or benefiting from her advocacy.

Erin's leadership and contributions will be deeply missed, but she will undoubtedly continue to inspire those who follow in her footsteps. On behalf of the constituents of California's 4th and 8th Congressional Districts, we wish Erin best wishes in her well-earned retirement and extend our sincere gratitude for her many years of service to the community.

HONORING THE MAURY HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM ON THEIR STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the members of the Maury High School Football Team from Norfolk, Virginia, on claiming their second straight Class 5 State Championship, and their first back-to-back state crown in program history.

On Saturday, December 14, 2024, the Maury Commodores won the championship game against the Briar Woods High School Falcons of Loudoun County by a score of 46-0. Led by Coach Dyrri McCain, the Commodores closed their season undefeated, recording 15 wins, including six shutouts, and maintained a 30-game winning streak extending back to last season.

Going into the championship, Maury faced a significant disadvantage after losing one of their star players in their previous game. Ari Watford, a defensive end committed to Clemson University, suffered a season ending injury in the semifinal game against Green Run High School on December 7. Without Watford, the team realized they would need to step up to win the state championship and did.

Throughout the championship game, the Commodores led on offense. Quarterback Au'Tori Newkirk scored on the first drive of the game with a 49-yard touchdown pass to receiver Lebron Bond. In the second quarter, Newkirk passed to receiver Jahvon Wiggins, who ran the ball into the end zone for another touchdown and widened the Commodores' lead to 14-0 at halftime. In the third quarter,

they scored 32 points in less than seven minutes. Newkirk threw four touchdown passes to Elijah Moss, Tayshawn Branche, Damon McDaniel, and another to Bond. These young athletes made everyone in the community proud and demonstrated their ability to overcome adversity.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to congratulate the Maury High School Football Team and thank Coach McCain, the parents, and the entire Maury High School community for supporting these students throughout this remarkable season. I wish them the best in their future endeavors, and I wish the program continued success.

HONORING BRAD FITCH FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE CONGRES- SIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION

HON. DEREK KILMER

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to recognize Bradford Fitch for his 17 years of service to the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF).

As most of my colleagues are well aware, CMF has played a vital role over the last five decades in supporting Congressional offices' continuous efforts to improve their staff management skills and function as high-performing teams. Through individual and group training, informative publications and events that highlight best practices in management and constituent service, CMF has been instrumental in helping Members and staff fulfill their responsibilities to their country, state and district.

Brad first joined CMF in 2001 as Deputy Director and returned to lead the organization as CEO in 2010. Prior to joining CMF, Brad spent the early years of his notable career as a congressional aide, journalist, consultant, college instructor, internet entrepreneur, and writer.

Brad has served Congress in a variety of roles throughout his professional life and is well-known and regarded in Washington. Those who know Brad won't be surprised to learn he began his career out of school as a radio and television reporter. His compelling speech and engaging personality have been cornerstones to his success.

In 1988, when Brad began on Capitol Hill, he worked for four members of Congress in a variety of positions, including press secretary, campaign manager, legislative director and chief of staff. It was during this period that it became clear that Brad was a passionate advocate for the institution of Congress as well as the members and their dedicated staff.

This year is the 40th Anniversary of CMF's consequential book—Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide. This book has been extremely influential in how Congressional offices are run today and we applaud Brad's significant role in its many updates and biennial distribution for over half of its existence.

In 2002, during a period of rapid—but uneven—shift of Congressional office communication to the internet, Brad initiated the Gold Mouse Awards to recognize the best congressional websites and share their best practices for communicating with, and providing services

to, constituents. The research and analysis that CMF performed for the Gold Mouse Awards identified the most innovative and effective web page practices and then shared that critical information with all Congressional offices so they could benefit everyone.

In 2018, Brad's vision for establishing an "Academy Awards" for Congress provided the spark for the creation of CMF's Democracy Awards program. The Democracy Awards, in a similar approach to the Gold Mouse Awards before them, are presented to both staff and members to acknowledge their exemplary use of best management practices, constituent services and transparency. By shining a spotlight on these leaders, the awards showcase their skills and practices for others to utilize and improve on.

Through his tenure at CMF, Brad has carefully stewarded its strong reputation for non-partisan work strengthening the management skills and workplace practices in Congress while building public understanding and trust in the legislative branch. Brad has been a life-long advocate for the institution of Congress, members, and staff and we thank him for his dedication and work on our behalf.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR KAY PATTERSON

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a trusted leader, a tireless champion for civil rights, and a treasured friend. South Carolina State Senator Kay Patterson transitioned on December 13, 2024. His integrity, courage, and wisdom will leave an indelible mark on the State of South Carolina for years to come.

Mr. Patterson was born in Darlington, South Carolina in 1931 and grew up in our shared hometown of Sumter. After graduating from Lincoln High School in 1949 and attending Claflin University, Kay joined the Marine Corps. After his discharge from the Corps, he returned to Claflin and later Allen University through the GI Bill. As a student at Allen, Kay cleaned offices at the South Carolina Statehouse where Black people were forbidden from entering in any official capacity.

Kay graduated from Allen in 1956 and began a public-school teaching career at W.A. Perry Middle School in Columbia where he taught for 14 years. When Columbia schools were integrated in 1970, Kay joined the South Carolina Education Association, where he worked for 15 years, in 1974, Kay was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives from House District 73 representing North Columbia. For the next 32 years, Kay served in the building where he was once forbidden from entering except to clean the offices.

As a Representative, Kay was singularly focused on being a voice for the voiceless. His background as a teacher made him a tireless advocate for public education and South Carolina's children. Eventually, he was selected as a member of the influential House Budget Committee. Kay was excited about this new opportunity, but that excitement vanished when I, among others, urged him to run for

the State Senate in 1984. Reluctantly, Kay eventually agreed to my appeal, and he went on to serve in the State Senate for 24 years, becoming just the second Black member to be elected to the chamber since the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras.

In the Senate, Kay became known for his sharp wit and oratory skills. Though Kay didn't speak on the floor of the Senate often, when he did, everyone listened. He wasn't afraid to discuss difficult topics like race and always believed in speaking up for what he believed in. His courage and wisdom made him a natural leader among his colleagues, who elected him to Chair the South Carolina Legislative Black Caucus and the Richland County Legislative Delegation, and to membership on the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees—the first Black man to serve on the board in the modern era.

Kay's proudest legislative achievement was his advocacy for removing the Confederate flag from the South Carolina Statehouse Dome. He introduced his first bill calling for the flag's removal in 1983 and eventually helped negotiate a compromise that saw the flag removed from the top of the dome to the statehouse grounds in 2000. When the flag was fully removed in 2015, it was, in no small part, due to Kay's decades of advocacy.

After his retirement from the South Carolina General Assembly in 2008, Kay continued to serve his community. Kay believed that true leadership involved being an example to those who are destined to follow. Many elected officials in South Carolina have sought his mentorship and many have been inspired to enter public service through his example. A civil rights icon and champion for the poor, Kay was an advocate for all who couldn't advocate for themselves. He was an extraordinary public servant not only for his community, but for the entire state of South Carolina.

I wrote in the Introduction of my Memoirs that, "All of my experiences have not been pleasant, but I have considered all of them to be blessings." I count my experiences with Kay as some of my life's greatest blessings, and he was a blessing to all who knew him. Kay will be sorely missed and may he rest in peace.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and our colleagues join me in celebrating the life and legacy of Senator Kay Patterson.

CELEBRATING DR. RACHEL HARDEMAN

HON. ILHAN OMAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Ms. OMAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my constituent and friend Dr. Rachel Hardeman for her extraordinary antiracist scholarship.

Dr. Hardeman is the founding director of the Center for Antiracism Research for Health Equity (CARHE), and the Blue Cross Endowed Professor of Health and Racial Equity in the Division of Health Policy & Management at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health. Her tremendous work at the Center led to her being named one of TIME's 100 most influential people in the world this year.

Led by Dr. Hardeman, the team of researchers at CARHE has garnered national and

international attention for their research on structural racism in healthcare. TIME specifically recognized Dr. Hardeman's work to address America's maternal health crisis, which has focused on disparate birthing outcomes across race and how police brutality can impact pregnancy and childbirth. Dr. Hardeman is committed to lending her expertise to shape policy that will positively impact our communities for generations to come, including Minnesota's groundbreaking Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act and the federal Momnibus Bill.

Dr. Hardeman has always placed community at the forefront of her work, and consistently partners with stakeholders to better inform her research. A prime example is her long-standing partnership with the Black-owned Roots Community Birthing Center in North Minneapolis which has been instrumental in her research to demonstrate a culturally-centered approach to birth equity that can help address the maternal health crisis we are facing.

This honor from TIME is indicative of Dr. Hardeman's dedication to working closely with community to produce results that are relevant not just locally, but around the country and the world. We are very fortunate to have such a brilliant, diligent, and thoughtful leader in Minnesota's Fifth Congressional District whose work has, and undoubtedly will continue to, lead to better health outcomes in Minnesota and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Dr. Hardeman for this recognition and share our gratitude for her invaluable contributions to the fields of health and racial equity.

RECOGNIZING SCOTT COLABELLA: FOUR DECADES OF HONORABLE PUBLIC SERVICE

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity today to highlight the deep, widespread and heartfelt appreciation shared by many across Ocean County, New Jersey for their extraordinary County Clerk, Scott Colabella, who will retire at the end of this month after a lifetime of outstanding public service to our New Jersey communities.

Scott is a great American patriot. His story of commitment, dedication and outstanding work on behalf of New Jersey citizens—and his leadership in securing foolproof, reliable elections—belongs in our Nation's congressional record, the official written history of this country since the Continental Congress.

I first met Scott in the early days of my campaigns and congressional service. In fact, Scott was among one of my first congressional interns in my freshman term in the 97th Congress in 1981. Serving in my Washington, D.C. office, Scott proved to be an outstanding worker, assisting me in the delivery of top-notch constituent service and legislative analysis.

After working on Capitol Hill and graduating from Rider University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science, Scott began a career of public service rewarded with promotions, achievements and advancement over the course of the next several decades.

His first stop was an eight-year stretch serving in Governor Tom Kean's Constituent Service Office and the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles. Thereafter, for many years, Scott served as the Executive Director of the Ocean County Republican Organization and ultimately, he became the Deputy County Clerk, of Ocean County in January 2004.

As Deputy Clerk, Scott proved his muscle and helped build a program based on a deep understanding of New Jersey election law and its equitable, just application. As such, the people of Ocean County recognized his talents and resoundingly elected him to serve as County Clerk in 2010.

Since 2010, Scott was elected by wide margins three consecutive times—a public affirmation and reward for his steady and exemplary service as a State Constitutional Officer.

When he took the helm as County Clerk, the office had a reputation as a well-run organization, but Scott still worked to find new ways to expand its reach and make it even better. Under his watch, the office processed millions of vote-by-mail applications and ballots and millions more sample ballots. Scott also directed the processing of countless trade names, passports, notary public oaths and veterans' cards.

During his tenure, Scott successfully launched the Property Alert Service to empower the public to monitor any changes made to their property records. He modernized election software to enable the public to monitor election results in real time on the Clerk's website, and he upgraded the electronic e-records system to attain paperless recording of over 70 percent of all mortgages and land deeds and other documents.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Scott met and stayed ahead of the extreme challenges facing county clerks across the state—and he helped lead the way. When voters in 2020 were required under state law to use only vote-by-mail ballots, for the first time ever, he met the task, secured the trust of the voters and achieved a successful election process.

A longtime resident of the Borough of Barnegat Light on Long Beach Island, Ocean County, New Jersey, Scott is moving on to the next chapter of his life.

He will be greatly missed by me and thousands of my fellow Ocean County residents, who have taken great confidence and comfort in knowing Scott Colabella was at the helm, securing free and fair elections in Ocean County.

We thank Scott for his unparalleled public service. May God bless my friend, and bring him added success and great luck in the years ahead.

ADDRESS OF MAJOR GENERAL
PETER ANDRYSIAK

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, inspiring remarks were presented by Major General Peter Andrysiak EUCOM Chief of Staff on December 14, 2024, for the Com-

memoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge at Luxembourg American Cemetery. Americans are grateful for the proven competence of the American military.

Good morning, Grand Duke Henri, Grand Duchess, King Philippe, Queen Mathilde, Prime Minister Frieden, Speaker Claude Wiseler, President Roberta Metsola of the European Parliament, Prime Minister Alexander de Croo, Ambassador Nelson, Secretary Djou, honorable Members of Congress, Ambassador Thomas Barrett, Commissioner Matthew Jones, distinguished guests, allies and partners, and most importantly, to our honored veterans that are with us here today, welcome today this sacred place we gather to honor the legacy of those who fought in the Battle of the Bulge. And it's a privilege to stand here among you in this solemn 80th anniversary, a moment to reflect on the courage and sacrifice that secured freedom that we cherish today. 80 years ago, in the depths of the Ardennes winter on the ground that we stand on, bore witness to extraordinary courage and unimaginable sacrifice. Young soldiers faced not only a relentless enemy fire, but also the freezing temperatures and the snow-covered terrain against the possible odds, they stood firm, not just for their own countries, but for the liberty of millions. Their fight was for something greater, a vision of a Free Europe and a better future. And so today as we commemorate their bravery, we reaffirm our gratitude for their sacrifice and the unity that made victory possible. For me, this commemoration is profoundly personal. My parents, like many millions in Europe, endured unimaginable horrors of World War Two. My father, orphaned by the Nazi tyranny when his mother was put in prison, was liberated by the Allied Forces who fought here in the Ardennes. His father, a man I never knew, perished in a concentration camp. My mother and her family were forced out of the Sudetenland and into forced labor camps and eventually granted refugee status in Germany. But the journey was a grueling one, and her father never survived it. Another man that I never had the opportunity to know. So these tragedies, like so many others, were the reality of life under the oppression during the war, yet their liberation and the liberation of millions came at the hands of Allied soldiers that we honor here today. Their courage gave my parents and countless others a second chance. They made it possible for me to be standing here in front of you today. Millions endured similar struggles, and millions owned their liberation to the soldiers who fought here. Their courage changed the course of history, not just for families like mine, but for entire nations. The Battle of the Bulge tested allied resolve under extreme conditions, and in December of 1944 the German Army launched a massive surprise offensive through the Ardennes, creating the infamous Bulge of the Allied front lines. Nowhere was this more evident than at Bastogne, where Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe in the 101st Division held the line against overwhelming odds, encircled and under siege. McAuliffe and his men faced relentless attacks under freezing conditions, and when the Germans demanded surrender, everybody knows the story that McAuliffe his famous statement "Nuts!" The Defiance became a rallying cry for the beleaguered defenders and a symbol of American and Allied determination and victory at Bastogne was marked by a turning point in the battle. It was the end of any German offensive, but it came at a high cost. Over 75,000 were killed, wounded or captured, but their sacrifice endured that the march

toward liberation would continue. The people of Luxembourg endured the occupation, suffering and loss during the war, yet they also witnessed liberation brought by Allied forces who risked and gave their lives in these very fields. Luxembourg has shown remarkable dedication to honoring those who fell here and through the care of this Cemetery and others like it, you remind us of the enduring bond forged between the nations in the crucible of war. And your commitment endures with your with you being your presence here, as these sacrifices are never forgotten. I've had the good opportunity and good fortune to be at a number of the American Battle Monuments, cemeteries, and I'm always in awe of their splendor? They're pristine. They're powerful, you know. And as we stand here, as you look behind me, 5,076 headstones, both Latin Crosses and Stars of David, were reminded of the extraordinary courage and the sacrifice of those who rest here, farmers, factory workers, teachers, students, fathers, brothers, sons and sisters and daughters, and they came from all walks of life, all races, and united for a common cause, the defense of freedom. Each marker is perfectly aligned and oriented westward toward home, a poignant reminder of the enduring connection that these heroes shared with the nation that they fought to protect, even in eternal rest, they faced the families who awaited their return but never got to see them again. The Wall of the Missing on both sides of the tent consists of two walls inscribed with the names of 371 service members whose remains were never recovered. And these walls standing in solemn symmetry symbolize the connection between those who fought and those who remain to honor their sacrifice. And then, though their bodies are absent, their memory endures as a testament to the cost of liberty. And at the center, right, or back here behind us stands the small chapel, a place for reflection and reverence, and the description in their reads their name liveth forevermore. These words serve as a solemn promise that the sacrifices for those who rest here will never be forgotten. This Cemetery and its pristine grounds are solemn and solid markers telling their story. We spare no expense to honor those who perished, providing them with a final resting place fitting of their sacrifice, a place that reflects the magnitude and courage the debt we owe to their memory. And so this sacred place ensures that their sacrifices will be remembered, not just by those that are gathered here today, but by the generations to come. The sacrifices of those who rest here are not relics of history. They are the foundation for the present and the future. NATO built on the unity and determination shown during these battles like The Ardennes remains a cornerstone of peace and security, and then today, NATO's commitment to collective defense and shared values is a shining city on a hill to deter aggression and to uphold freedom secured by these brave men and women. The courage and resolve of these soldiers inspire us all, and still, they challenge us to live up to their legacy by protecting the values they fought for, liberty, unity and dignity for all. I'll close with a quote from President Roosevelt. The light of their sacrifice shall not grow dim with the passing years, let us ensure that their gift of liberty endures for generations. So let us honor their legacy, not only with our words but our actions. Let us strive to live lives worthy of their sacrifice by protecting the freedoms they fought for, fostering unity amongst nations and standing resolute against tyranny in all of its forms. So May their bravery continue to inspire us, may their memory forever guide us toward a better world, Thank you.

SENATOR JERRY MORAN AT
BASTOGNE

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, hosted by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) and U.S. Embassy Belgium, on December 13, 2024, at the Mardasson Memorial featured remarks by Senator Jerry Moran. Heartfelt observations by a fellow son of a Kansas, same as Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Ladies and gentlemen, and our veterans, those who served here at the Battle of the Bulge and around the globe, who served in World War Two and the wars that preceded that, and those who serve today, it's an honor to be with you here in Belgium to lead this Senate Delegation to the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. And I want to recognize my colleagues from the Senate who are here, Senator Susan Collins, Senator John Barrasso, Senator Kristen Gillibrand and Senator Maggie Hassan. I also recognize Congressman and Chairman McCaul and his House members and Administrator Bill Nelson in his representation of the Administration of the United States of America. We thank all of you who have traveled here today for this very important and significant occasion. I represent the state of Kansas, the home of Dwight D. Eisenhower in the United States Senate, I am the ranking member and incoming Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. In marking this commemoration in Belgium today and Luxembourg tomorrow, we are here to pay tribute to and to honor the memory of the men who fought for freedom on the European Continent and those who remain here, still lying in internal rest in sites like Ardennes, the American Cemetery to the north and Luxembourg American Cemetery to the southeast. Together, they are the final resting place for more than 10,000 Americans, and another 834 are memorialized on the wall of the missing places like these and the monuments where we are today are reminders of the price that were paid for the liberties that we each enjoy. The Battle of the Bulge was the largest, as we've heard, the most costly battle for the Americans during World War Two. On the morning of December 16, 1944, under the cover of poor weather, Nazi Germany launched a final offensive seeking to divide allied forces and to force a negotiated end to the hostilities on this Western Front. Despite being outnumbered, outgunned short of supplies, it was here during the coldest winter in decades, where the US Army's 101st Airborne Division, The Screaming Eagles, held off the enemy's advances and bought time for the allies to halt and counter the last gasp the surprise attack of the enemy. This Band of Brothers was made up of men from every corner of the United States, such as Senator Collins, Father Don Collins, Senator Barrasso, Father John and Senator Hassan's father, Robert Wood and many more. Those of you here in attendance today who have loved ones, who served, who answered the call and to bear arms in this Battle of the Bulge. On December 22, 1944, General Eisenhower, from that small town in Kansas called Abilene, sent the following message to every member of the Allied Expeditionary Force. General Eisenhower said, "the enemy is making his supreme effort. He is fighting savagely to take

back all that you have won, but already in this battle, your gallantry has done much to foil his plans. In the face of your proven bravery, your fortitude, he the enemy will completely fail, but we cannot be content with just a mere repulse by rushing out from his fixed defenses. The enemy may have given us the chance to turn his great gamble into his worst defeat." I call upon Eisenhower speaking here. "I call upon every man of the Allies to rise now to new heights of courage, of resolution and of effort, united in this determination and with this unshakable faith in the cause for which we fight, we will, with God's help, go forward to our greatest victory." With that message in the soldiers' minds and hearts, the fighting continued through Christmas, the soldiers huddled in their foxholes and prayed between shellings, echoing the prayers of their loved ones in church pews and around the dinner tables back home, as the calendar turned from 1944 to 1945 the Allied Army steadily drove back the enemy in a unified push toward victory. One year after the war ended on America's Independence Day, the people of Belgium broke ground on this site to demonstrate and to dedicate this patch of earth to the memory of the heroes of the Battle of the Bulge in this center of this monument, there is an inscription that, when translated into English, reads the Belgium people remember their American liberators, July 4, 1946, I thought of that as we drove through this town and saw the Christmas ornaments, the trees, the stars, the lights, what happened here 80 years ago makes life possible here today and other places around our globe. This Transatlantic partnership forged in war, remains a pillar of strength for both of our nations, Belgium and the United States. And as Russia wages war in Ukraine, the bonds of NATO must grow stronger and continue to deter the aggression of our shared adversaries. The General indicated what the Germans were trying to accomplish, and I take his words to say, we too must demonstrate the Alliance cannot be shattered. We will stand together today, shoulder to shoulder, just as the soldiers who liberated this continent did eight decades ago, 80 years after the Battle of the Bulge, remember, we remember the cost paid by those who died here and those who served here. Time cannot time must not dim the glory of their deeds. We often look for heroes, and we look in baseball parks and amphitheaters and sports figures entertainers. We sometimes look to politicians to be heroes, and sometimes they are. But mostly we don't have to look very far for heroes. They are among us, among us today in our hometowns across the United States of America, they are the ones who served there's a small memorial back home in Abilene, Kansas. It's a memorial at the presidential library of Dwight D. Eisenhower that bears this inscription. "Let us be glad that such heroes have lived and mourn those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Indeed, let us be glad for those, those heroes who have lived, those heroes who show us away and let us strive to live our lives in a manner worthy of their sacrifices." God Bless you, veterans. Thank you for being our heroes and our role models. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MICHAEL MCCAUL
HONORS VETERANS

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I was grateful to participate in CODEL

McCaul for the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. A highlight of the ceremonies at the Bastogne War Museum in Belgium was a speech by Chairman Michael McCaul of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, on December 13, 2024. As Chairman McCaul completes his impressive service as Committee Chairman, his sincere presentation will always be historically appreciated.

Thank you. It's truly an honor to be here today, but also to be the presence of our veterans of Battle the Bulge. You're truly heroes, and I thank you for being here today. Today we gather to honor and remember the valor and sacrifice of the men who fought the bitter cold of December 1944 and changed the course of history, the freedoms that we enjoy today were born out of this bloody battle, which Winston Churchill described as undoubtedly the greatest American battle of the war 80 years ago in the Ardennes Forest of Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany. The Battle of the Bulge began a desperate and brutal offensive by Nazi forces that tested the resolve of the Allied troops, while the U.S. and allied forces faced tremendous challenges against a well-equipped and well-trained enemy. The American troops did what they do best. They stood up to the challenge and held the line. This was also my father's war. I cannot stand here today without thinking about him. James McCaul, the veteran of the European theater. He served as a bombardier on a B 17, known as a Flying Fortress, participating in 32 bombing missions on enemy targets, including this one right here today, he was part of the largest bombing mission in U.S. history, in support of the D Day invasion in Normandy, as well as the skies above us during the Battle of the Bulge. He was and is always my hero, as are you, and so too are all those who bravely liberated a continent and defeated evil their commitment to victory at all cost, exemplified the grit and defiance of the American spirit. It was here in the frozen forest that the world witnesses strength and unity and resolve soldiers like the men of the 101st Airborne who held the line in Bastogne, despite being surrounded and outnumbered, they refused to surrender. They understood the stakes that were happening right here, aside from the death and carnage from the battle, American troops faced one of the coldest winters in recorded history, with record breaking temperatures sinking as low as negative 18 degrees Fahrenheit, trench foot, frostbite, arctic conditions were just as deadly as Hitler's army. Supply lines were stretched thin. Troops were exhausted from constant combat as they advanced across Europe, closing in on Berlin, the battle spanned six weeks and had staggering costs, 80,000 casualties, nearly 20,000 killed Americans and 20,000 taken prisoner, and the SS did not abide by the Geneva Convention, all told; half a million Americans, along with over half a million Allied troops, fought in this battle. It was the bloodiest battle for U.S. forces during the entirety of World War Two. The Allied Victory here broke the back of the Nazi war machine and paved the way for liberation of Europe. The memory of this battle should reinforce the moral clarity to defend freedom at all costs. My father's generation, your generation, fought to eradicate evil, and we must never forget their sacrifices and continue the legacy of freedom that they handed down to us, to my children and to our grandchildren. As a Texan, I'm also proud that many heroes of this battle went to Texas A&M University, which I represent, including then Colonel James Earl Rudder. He was a distinguished Texas A&M alumnus who was a commanding officer of the Army's Second Ranger Battalion. He was one of the amazing soldiers who landed at

Omaha Beach, and stormed Pointe du Hoc, scaling 100-foot cliffs, neutralizing the German guns above. He continued his mission across Europe, fighting in this very battle, the Battle of the Bulge. And the relevance of this Battle is just as important today as it was 80 years ago. History can repeat itself once again. We are witnessing the largest land invasion in Europe since 1939 with Russian aggression in Ukraine and Eastern Europe. We are also witnessing the rise of Chairman Xi in China and the Ayatollah in Iran is also rearing his ugly head. We are witnessing a world on fire and a battle again between good and evil. The significance of this battle must serve as a reminder that Freedom is Never Free. In that the democracies around the world must rally to the cause of freedom when it is under attack. We do not choose our enemies. They choose us. And just as we fought the Nazis during World War Two, we will continue to fight for freedom and democracy. It is our duty to take the lessons learned from our fathers, grandfathers in history, to preserve what these men fought for. In a time of great peril, these men fought against tyranny and oppression, to preserve freedom. History will always remember them as the greatest generation, may God bless our veterans, the fallen heroes of the Battle of the Bulge, the great people of Bastogne, and the United States of America, and may He hold them in the palm of his hand. Thank you.

INSPIRING REMARKS OF JOHN FOY

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, World War II veteran, John Foy, provided extraordinary remarks on December 14, 2024, for the Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge at Luxembourg American Cemetery. His humble insight and determination will forever be an inspiration for freedom and democracy as recognized by the late Army Pfc. Thomas Caughman of Lexington, South Carolina, that "Freedom isn't Free."

I'm a little short, Ladies and gentlemen, Your Majesties, distinguished guests, and especially fellow veterans. 80 years ago, we stood in these frozen forests young men facing an unrelenting enemy and the harshest of winters, it actually get down to below zero at times. The Battle of the Bulge was not just a test of strategy, but of spirit, determination and sacrifice. I remember the bitter cold, the weight of my machine gun and the faces of my brothers in arms, ordinary men who displayed extraordinary courage. Together, we fought for freedom, step by painful step through snow and enemy fire. Some of these faces I still can see frozen in time, they were sons, fathers, friends, who gave everything so that others might live. The Ardennes offensive was a turning point, not just in the time of war, but in our lives. It taught us the value of resilience, unity, sacrifice. Today, we honor those who did not return, whose lives ended here, ensuring that turns that tyranny would not prevail. To my fellow veterans, thank you for your service, to the families of the fallen, their sacrifices not forgotten, and to those who come after us, may you always remember that the freedoms we cherish came at a terrible cost. Let us remember of this Battle inspired us to work for a world where such sacrifices are no

longer needed. I'm a small man, but I was a tiger back then, that I had a strong faith in God and in my Catholic faith certainly helped, although much of what we did was completely alien to those teachings, the killing was the worst. Almost every day, one or more of us would be killed or wounded, and every day, we would kill German soldiers. After a while, we came almost numb to such a thing. Purple Hearts were earned by the thousands. The bleeding wounds of 69,000 young Americans stained the snow and left that Red Badge of Courage on that blood-soaked field of battle. The American army had 90,000 casualties, about 19,000 of that were killed in action, 20,000 taken prisoners and about 50,000 wounded. My company was badly decimated, down to about 50 men left from 200. My machine gun section of 12 men had five killed and three badly wounded. They were my friends. This country was truly blessed. The Ardennes Woods are silent now. The battle smoke has fled. 80 years have passed. Now only memories and the dead. Thank you. May God bless you. Thank you.

ADDRESS OF BRIGADIER GENERAL
ANDREW SASLAV

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I was grateful to participate in CODEL McCaul for the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. An inspiring speech was delivered by Brigadier General Andrew Saslav at the Bastogne War Museum, Belgium, on December 13, 2024, confirming the professionalism and dedication of the American military freedom and democracy.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, friends and family, the brave men and women who fought here 80 years ago, and most importantly, our veterans. It is my honor and my privilege to be with you here today. It's 05:30. It's the 16th of December 1944, the ground in the air around the men and women of the 12th US Army Group begins to shake. The air begins to burn. It is the start of a 90-minute barrage by 1,600 artillery pieces. It's the start of the last offensive the Germans would launch in the Second World War. Their objective of this fight was to shatter the front lines to separate forces. It was to reach the vital port of Antwerp and ultimately to break the alliance that had landed here in June. To this end, the Nazis had assembled three veteran armies. They were led by their most proven and battle-hardened commanders. They were offered the newest equipment available and the most technologically advanced capabilities the Nazis had. They were fighting their proven play. It had taken them across what Europe lightning fast in 1940 and standing in their way. Standing in their way were American divisions that were actually brand new to the front or had been pulled out of the brutal fighting in the herd and forest. Each of those divisions covered an area that was over twice the size we expected a division to be able to defend. The numbers were simply in the Nazis favor. Any war game done then, any war game done today, would have told you that they had all the advantages. But what we must remember here today, what this battle should always remind us of, what my 27 years in uniform has taught me is that machines and tools of war increase the brutality and the lethality of war, but that

training matters, Experience matters, heart and esprit de corps are essential, and they will upend the results of any war game ever done. The Battle of the Bulge had begun. The Nazi army slammed into US lines, and while our men fought hard under overwhelming force, those lines began to break. Regiments were separated, regiments were surrounded, and the allies were in trouble. At Eisenhower's headquarters, they quickly realized what was happening and the gravity of the consequences of this attack. First, they called for the 18th Airborne Corps. It was down in bases in France after being pulled off of a bitter fight in the Netherlands during Operation Market Garden, the 82nd 101st Airborne were rushed north. The 82nd would make its way north of here to a portion of the fight where they would stop the lead elements of the first SS Panzer Corps. This was not our fight alone. Field monitor, Montgomery's, 21st Army Group was rushed from the north, and Patton's Third Army would make a heroic and simply amazing 48 hour drive to turn itself and move towards Bastogne and the Battle of the Bulge, our alliance was focused and it was moving towards the fight. But ladies and gentlemen, this is a human endeavor. It's the story of humans that made the difference here 80 years ago in the North. The furthest the Nazis would get was within five commit five kilometers of the Meuse river. You see there. They encountered the Third Royal Tank Regiment of 30th British Corps, and they encountered Sergeant Frederick Prover operating a lone Firefly Sherman tank. He engaged the lead elements, destroying a mark four, a half track and a German fuel truck. His actions would allow the allies in the north three group and counterattack the next day, ceasing the Movement West Patton's Army advanced to Bastogne in it private. James Hendricks, only 17 years old at the time of the fourth Armored Division came under attack from two Nazi 88 he got out of his vehicle, and he rushed shows with his rifle, forcing both of the crews of those guns to surrender. In the meantime, two of his fellow soldiers were wounded. He fought off those attackers, and he recovered those two wounded men. The column began to move again, and a fuel truck exploded after being hit. He rushed forward and pulled the driver to safety and put out the flames on that driver for his actions that day, Private Hendrix would earn the Medal of Honor. Sergeant Lester Courts, Private Ralph Ellis and Sergeant George Carroll were all separated from their units during the fight. They would survive the battle of the bulge. They survived because the heroic actions of French, Belgian, and Luxembourg citizens who came to the raid, Marician and Elise Goble, Louis Stein, Martz and Mr. and Mrs. Jean, Pereira, and Baltashier. They hid, they cared for, and eventually returned these soldiers to friendly lines, all at great personal risk. This fight was about people. It is people that make up our alliances. It is the soldiers and the citizens that we came here to liberate, that all came together in the cause of freedom. But today, ladies and gentlemen, we stand in Bastogne, the landing ground of the troopers of the 100 and first airborne. They were offered the simplest instructions for their mission, hold the vital crossroads and don't let that stone be taken. They arrived here not by not by parachute, as they'd arrived at every battle before Europe. But they arrived here by truck. But they arrived with the same determination that they had been at Normandy, the same fighting spirit that had carried them into the Netherlands in the face of overwhelming German forces, they accomplished their mission. The siege of Bastogne pitted these high these lightly armed paratroopers against the armored might of the 47th Panzer Corps. But

war is a human endeavor, and while the Nazis had lots of armor, the troopers of the 101st had a rendezvous with destiny. Now most of history will tell you that that siege was eventually broken on the 26th of December, at 1650 hours as Cobra King, the lead tank of Patton's Third Army reached Bastogne. I think the troopers of the 101st would tell you that the only thing those tanks allowed him to do was continue the attack. War is a human endeavor. It was then, and it is now. What the world witnessed 80 years ago is what happens when the cause of freedom is led by valiant action, a coalition and Alliance built on freedom and liberty, not conquest. In the words of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Battle of the Bulge was a great and glorious victory. But it is also a reminder that freedom is not free, that the price of freedom is paid in the blood and the sweat of those that defend it. Today, we are joined here today by veterans of that fight from 80 years ago. And gentlemen, it is my great honor to be in your presence. Thank you. Your legacy is what makes our Army great today. Thank you.

REMARKS OF FOREIGN MINISTER
BERNARD QUENTIN

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on December 13, 2024, during the commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, hosted by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) and the U.S. Embassy in Belgium, inspiring remarks were presented by Belgian Foreign Minister, Bernard Quentin. The alliance of Belgium and the United States is unshakeable.

Dear Senator, Bill Nelson NASA Administrator and Representative of His Excellency, the President of the United States of America, Ambassador Michael Adler, and members of the official U.S. delegation, including, of course, very specially, the veterans and their families and carers. It is a true honor to stand in front of you here in Bastogne, ambassadors and other security distinguished guests present tonight. Dear Mr. Benoît Lutgen, Mayor of Bastogne, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, the nuts that will be thrown tomorrow in homage to General Anthony McAuliffe, the GIs elements in which you might drink a delicious local beer in a Bastogne Cafe later tonight, carefully the last resting place of General George Patton just across the border. Not many battles in history have generated emotions and symbols as strong as those related to the Battle of the Bulge for many generations, this Battle is synonymous with courage, resilience and self-sacrifice. It is a powerful symbol of unity and resistance of democratic countries against tyranny and violence, it is also a potent reminder that peace and freedom come at a price, as we honor the memory of so many young soldiers from all over the U.S. and other allied countries who fell for the freedom of Europe. How can we not think of the Ukrainian soldiers who are today dying in the snow, in the frozen mud to defend their country against an unprovoked war of aggression? Tonight, ceremonies remind us of the importance to stand side by side in the fight for the rightful cause. It reminds us of our duty to support Ukraine for as long as it takes, because, as we saw here in Bastogne, the violence and brutality should never prevail, ladies and gentlemen, not taking any-

thing away from the tribute we owe to the British and Canadian soldiers who also fought and died in the larger theater operation, including your own Brigadier men, nor the Free Poles, Free French, and also all those coming from all over the world, including India and Africa. Looking at the names on the graves, on the Ardennes Forest, this is essentially an American history and a tragic and glorious epitome of America's unflinching dedication to preserving liberty, democracy and human rights in the world. We are here, first and foremost, to honor freedom and do tribute to troops from all corners of the U.S. who came here to liberate our land, my land, from the yoke of Nazism thousands of miles from their own cities and villages. We celebrate them, those who are with us today, the others who could enjoy and the children, nieces, nephews, grandchildren and grand grandchildren of those who are not with us any longer. We are also here to give a strong message of hope and unity, both as a minister and as a historian. I know that the United States of America and Belgium share a long history during which they have consistently defended together the values of humanity and freedoms that both our nations are built upon. One moving story I remember was told in a great documentary series in the battle that was broadcasted in on Belgium television when I was still a child, already a long time ago, the story of young servicemen from the Midwest who, during the battle, were trying to communicate with local villagers despite not speaking any French. Soon, they discovered that the dialect they were speaking back in Wisconsin or Minnesota was actually a Walloon, one perfectly understandable to the Bastogne they were addressing. Like them, hundreds of thousands of Americans claim Belgian lineage today. Thousands of viewers and Belgian citizens live in the other country, with hundreds of thousands more employed by investors from the other country and countless tourist researchers. And students, sports, people and artists traveling each year across the Atlantic Ocean. These are deep and enduring bonds. Allies yesterday are allies today, and it is only by remaining trustful security partners that we will be able to tackle the current global challenges, a nature of safety and prosperity. Belgium's commitment to the Transatlantic Partnership is a tenet of its foreign policy, as is our result, to strive for peace in Europe, in Africa and, of course, in East Asia and the Middle East. Allies were also in many other combats with us. One example among many, the fight against criminal activities, including narcotics and the modern slavery of peoples of people smuggling, increasingly co-operating, both at home and in third countries. We need to enhance our common fight, because these threats are numerous, challenging our freedom and our democracies worldwide. Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, we are those future generations for which the young GIs, paratroopers, gunners and Rangers fought 80 years ago. Let us show ourselves worthy of those who gave their lives for us, and let us continue the strong tradition of mutual trust and friendship that has existed for close to two centuries, and even more so since World War Two and the Battle of the Bulge, it is now our duty to preserve the freedom that has been bestowed on us and to pass it on to today's fellow generation. And if you allow me, dear veterans, when I saw you, I had to remember a personal event late in the 90s. I was sitting watching the news with my beloved late grandmother, born before the First World War. It was a war in Serbia, and she was crying, and I don't remember. I don't want to remember the stupidity I told her, so why are you crying? And she looked at me back,

and she loved me a lot, but there Her eyes were not happy, and she told me, I knew. What do you know about war? Nothing, But you know and you give to all of us. The best of you. Thank you very much.

WELCOME REMARKS OF
SECRETARY CHARLES DJOU

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, Americans are grateful for the service of American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) Secretary Charles K. Djou who provided welcome remarks of the Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge at the Luxembourg American Cemetery on December 14, 2024. With his AMBC leadership, American cemeteries worldwide are a permanent recognition of affection for servicemembers recognizing Freedom Is Not Free. When Americans liberate nations from oppression, it is not for occupation as we request only to have sufficient acreage to bury valiant American patriots.

Good morning, Your Majesties, Prime Ministers, Administrator Nelson, Ambassador Barrett, members of the United States Senate and United States House of Representatives. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Luxembourg American Cemetery. I'd like to start here this morning by sharing with all of you a very quick story about one soldier. His name is Alexis Sommaripa. Alexis was born in Odessa, Ukraine. He went on to serve. He went on to graduate from Harvard University, and when World War Two broke out, he was 41 years old. But he nevertheless volunteered to serve in the United States military, and because of his language skills, speaking Russian, Ukrainian, German, and French. He was put in the Intelligence Corps. He landed on Normandy Beach and fought here at the Battle of the Bulge. He went on and was assigned to the 37th Tank Battalion, Fourth Armored Division, unfortunately, after the Battle of the Bulge, while he was sitting at the top and commanding a tank, Alexis' tank was strafed by German Messerschmidt. It wounded the driver, flinging him from the tank, and the tank Raj fell over on Alexis. He is buried here at the Luxembourg American Cemetery. He is buried a Plot E, Row 15, Grave, 65. I raise the story with all of you, because all of these crosses and these Stars of David that rest behind me are not movie props. They are not just figures. They are the lives of real Americans who gave the ultimate sacrifice in the cause of freedom, and each and every one have a story as compelling as Alexis. And I raise this story because Alexi was a Ukrainian-American, and the relevance today with the largest invasion on the plains of Ukraine, unprovoked, is today steaming across Europe. I know, ladies and gentlemen, that there are many here in this world who question, who doubt, who wonder, do places like this exist? Do ceremonies like this still have relevance today? I'm here to respond to you, to all who question, to all who wonder, to all who doubt. Come, come here to Luxembourg. Come here to the Luxembourg American Cemetery. Come see these crosses and these Stars of David. Come and see what true sacrifice is about. Because you see, ladies and gentlemen, when the United States of America stands at its best, when we are at our finest America does not send its young, its brave and its finest to fight for a king or

a crown. We do not fight for a sect or denomination. We do not even fight for a motherland or a fatherland, and Americans most certainly never fight for conquest or plunder or enslavement of another people. Instead, when America sends its young, its brave and its finest to fight and yes, sometimes make the ultimate sacrifice, America does it for simple, humble values, the values of liberty and democracy and when the job is done, when the mission is accomplished, when America has taken down the dictator and

stood up democracy, Americans do something utterly unique in the history of mankind. We go home all that America asks for in return. In exchange for the sacrifice of our young, are a few small plots of land to bury our dead. All of you are seated here today in one of those small plots of land, and that is why this place, this ceremony, is still so important. It reminds us of American sacrifice, and it reminds all of the autocrats and the dictators in this world, whether they be in Moscow or Beijing, whether they be in

Tehran or Pyongyang, the autocracy may seem powerful. The dictatorship may seem strong. But here this place at the Luxembourg American Cemetery. We remind the world that there is nothing more powerful in it than a free people willing to fight for freedom. Ladies and gentlemen, May the good Lord bless each and every one of you. Bless Luxembourg and the United States of America. Thank you.