

Purple Heart. He now rests among America's heroes at Arlington National Cemetery.

Though 45 years have passed since that fateful day, his memory endures. His name and sacrifice have been immortalized: in 2006, the Marine Corps Embassy Security Group dedicated a classroom in his honor; in 2009, Steven J. Crowley Memorial Park was unveiled in the Town of Brookhaven, New York; and in 2023, the Marine Corps Embassy Security Group renamed its student barracks in tribute to his legacy.

Today, I urge my colleagues to reflect on the magnitude of his sacrifice. On behalf of a grateful community and a grateful Nation, we offer our deepest respect and gratitude to Corporal Steven Crowley. May his courage and dedication never be forgotten.

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN
HERO JOE DEPINTO

HON. BETH VAN DUYNE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Joe DePinto. Joe has made a profound impact on North Texas through his leadership in business and community service. A graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, his career has been guided by his early lessons of discipline, strategy, and teamwork.

After serving as an officer in the U.S. Army's Field Artillery branch, Joe transitioned to the corporate world. As the CEO of Irving-based 7-Eleven, he led the company to achieve unprecedented growth and modernization, driving job creation and economic development in North Texas.

Beyond his corporate success, Joe has been a strong and consistent advocate for America's military families, veterans, and education. His leadership talents aren't limited to corporate boardrooms—Joe has held key roles with organizations like the Johnny Mac Soldiers Fund and the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation, working to improve the lives of many. In recognition of his selfless personal sacrifices and unwavering commitment to supporting our military and veterans, Joe recently received the Sam Johnson Defender of Freedom Award.

Joe's contributions reflect the values of service and leadership that make our North Texas community so special. Whether through corporate initiatives or personal advocacy, Joe continues to set an example of how business leaders can drive positive change.

HONORING PHILLIP AUSTIN

HON. GREG STANTON

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Mr. STANTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the life and legacy of Phillip Austin, who passed away on December 20, 2024, at the age of 73 years old. An Arizona trailblazer and a champion for the Latino community, Phil will continue to live on through the countless lives he positively impacted.

A fourth-generation Arizonan, Phil was born in Mesa, Arizona, on February 17, 1951, to Albert "Beto" & Margaret "Maggie" Austin, who devoted their lives to operating Albert's Market. From a young age, Beto and Maggie instilled in him and his six siblings the value of service and hard work.

After graduating from Brophy College Preparatory in 1969, Phil continued his studies at Santa Clara University and the University of California, Berkeley School of Law, where his passion for civil rights was ignited. Phil often reminisced about his days as a student activist, specifically recalling his arrest for joining a "sit-in" protest over the firing of Latino faculty.

His lifelong pursuit of justice continued back in Arizona where Phil served as Assistant Attorney General and Chief Counsel for the Arizona Attorney General Civil Rights Division for sixteen years. His service at the Attorney General's office was instrumental in the passage of Arizona's first fair housing legislation, anti-discrimination laws for the elderly and disabled, and initiatives fostering the development of dispute resolution and mediation programs throughout the state of Arizona.

Known by then as "Mr. Mesa," his passionate advocacy for the Latino community prompted him to establish the East Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, equipping innovative Hispanic entrepreneurs with the confidence and resources to achieve their highest aspirations.

In 1994, he opened his own legal practice in downtown Mesa, where he practiced transactional, employment, civil rights, and fair housing law. Phil was a dedicated public servant and a beacon of hope for immigrants. He would donate space in his law firm to strategize and combat harsh and damaging anti-immigrant policies like SB1070—a law that devastated many Latino families in Arizona. Phil also played a key role in establishing the Alston House Center for Peace and Justice, a community hub for services and social justice initiatives. These efforts led him to also establish the Latino PAC del Rio Salado, giving a platform to bright and aspiring Latino elected officials.

Phil devoted his life to forging a stronger path forward for our state, earning him countless awards and recognitions, including the Phoenix Jaycee's Three Outstanding Young Men Award, Valle de Sol's Exemplary Leadership Award, and the NAACP's Roy Wilkins Award. Phil donated his time often, sitting on several state and local advisory boards. He founded the Mesa Association of Hispanic Citizens, the Albert D. Austin, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Fund, the Albert D. Austin Mariachi Academy to empower young people through music education and cultural enrichment, and the EVHCC's STEAM Scholars program. Arizona owes a debt of gratitude to Phil.

Phil will be remembered for his tender-hearted nature and being a loving friend, brother, father, husband, and Tata. He is survived by his beloved wife, Christy, and his beloved children Lela, Lt. Colonel Phillip A. Austin, Angelo Austin, State Representative Lorena Austin, and his beautiful grandchildren. I thank him. Godspeed.

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN
HERO ANIRUDH MAZUMDER

HON. BETH VAN DUYNE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science senior, Anirudh Mazumder. Anirudh's desire to serve others began in childhood, inspired by summers spent with his grandparents, where he learned the power of community involvement. This early influence motivated him to work toward unlocking the potential of our North Texas community, including through participating in our Congressional Youth Advisory Council.

After witnessing a family member's struggle to find a kidney donor, Anirudh co-founded KidneyChain LLC to address the inefficiencies in organ matching, aiming to save lives by preventing organ waste, and he currently serves on the National Kidney Association's Advisory Committee. Anirudh later participated in the Colleyville Chamber of Commerce's Youth Leadership Program, where he noticed a decline in youth volunteerism, prompting him to launch his "Rise and Serve" initiative that has engaged nearly 100 young North Texans. To help build excitement and interest in public service, Anirudh created a website and podcast series featuring local leaders to showcase service opportunities and highlight success stories.

I thank Anirudh for his dedication to engaging North Texans in public service. Our community's future looks brighter than ever thanks to young leaders like him.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL
EDUCATION

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, the Hernando County School District has long been committed to providing high-quality education that prepares students for success in both academic and career pursuits. The district believes in the power of Career and Technical Education (CTE) to support students in achieving economic independence and contribute meaningfully to the community.

For its more than 23,000 students, the Hernando County School District offers a wide variety of CTE programs across 14 of the 16 career clusters identified by the Florida Department of Education. These programs provide students with a comprehensive education focused on technical, "soft" and industry specific skills in fields ranging from Healthcare, Information Technology, and Agriculture to Skilled Trades and Entrepreneurship. More than 86 percent of Hernando School's graduating seniors have participated in CTE programs, underscoring the district's commitment to introducing and expanding access to these rich and experiential courses that will inform students long after graduation.

A fundamental component of the growth and popularity of CTE in the school district is the

collaboration between the school district, local industries, governing agencies and workforce leaders. This partnership ensures there is alignment between the needs of employers and industry leaders to the school districts CTE program, strengthening the talent pipeline and highlighting employment opportunities within the community. As an example, Hernando Schools was an early adopter of the Space Academy initiative led by Space Florida. As an advocate for this exciting and novel initiative, in 2024, HCSD was one of 22 school districts named a Space Academy District to grow Space Industry momentum in Hernando County.

A significant milestone for the expansion of Career and Technical Education was the opening of the Wilton Simpson Technical College, the first postsecondary site in the county. Wilton Simpson Technical College or "STC" will provide the community with access to advanced technical training and certification programs, expanding postsecondary educational opportunities in needed workforce industries. Through the use of voter approved millage funds, Hernando Schools demonstrates a commitment to ensuring this new facility is outfitted with cutting-edge resources to enhance a variety of programs.

The vision of the Hernando School District is to "grow our own" by providing educational pathways that lead to stable, rewarding, and local careers. We embrace our role and are honored to serve as a driving force for creating a healthy community through quality workforce education, strong partnerships with local leaders and as a proponent of forward-thinking industry initiatives that will position Hernando County as a lifelong home for residents. Hernando County is well positioned to be a place where education, industry, and community work hand-in-hand to create lasting success.

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN
HERO DR. RAMESH SHARMA

HON. BETH VAN DUYN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Ms. VAN DUYN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Dr. Ramesh Sharma of Fort Worth. At 85 years old, Dr. Sharma is a shining example that age is merely a number. Raised in India, he earned his degree in mechanical engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology before joining the civilian Indian naval forces. He completed several years of service before immigrating to the U.S. and settling in Fort Worth in 1986. Working as a stress engineer at various nuclear power plants, Dr. Sharma was driven by a desire to provide his children with the best educational opportunities.

Upon retirement, he set his sights on his next goal: continuing his education. In 2014, he completed his master's degree in mechanical engineering at the University of Texas at Arlington. Taking classes one by one over the next decade, he earned his Ph.D. in Mathematics, an incredible feat he attributes to the unwavering support of his family and professors. At his graduation, a touching moment unfolded as his son, who also earned his doctorate, assisted him in donning his graduation

robes. Dr. Sharma aims to mentor students and give back to our community.

Dr. Sharma's determination in the pursuit of knowledge is an inspiration to North Texans and I congratulate him on his incredible achievement.

TRIBUTE TO A BALTIMORE TV
ICON: THE LATE REVEREND DR.
TIMOTHY LAMAR TOOTEN, SR.

HON. KWEISI MFUME

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a dear friend, a loving family man, an inspiring educator, a devout pastor, an accomplished writer, an award-winning journalist, and a person of the highest caliber—the late Reverend Dr. Timothy Lamar Tooten, Sr.

Dr. Tim Tooten was not a native son of Baltimore, but we embraced him as one of our own. He gravitated towards journalism as a child, interviewing his middle school classmates using a pencil as a microphone. Tim's course in life was set in high school, when a teacher asked him to record a Public Service Announcement for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), urging voter registration—and he fell in love with the sound of his voice on the air.

He continued broadcasting as a student at Florida State University. His career began in earnest when he was chosen for a competitive internship with the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, spending a year in Washington, D.C. learning his trade.

His next stop was Huntington, West Virginia, where he spent five years working for WSAZ-TV. In Huntington, he met the love of his life, Charleen Dawson Tooten, and they would spend the next 40 years together in blissful matrimony.

After his time in Huntington was done, Tim moved his family to Baltimore, working as a reporter at WMAR-2 for just over a year. Following this chapter at WMAR-2, he began selling insurance to support his family while continuing to do freelance journalism. This freelance work led to his hiring at WBAL-TV, the station that he called home for 35 years.

At WBAL-TV, Dr. Tooten was the station's only education reporter, and he gradually became one of Baltimore's most recognized faces and most trusted voices. He was especially beloved by the children of the Baltimore area, who knew that the snow day wasn't official until they heard it from Tim.

Dr. Tooten's voice was respected not only by the people of Baltimore, but also by his journalistic colleagues. He was immensely proud of his work on the documentary *Africa's Maryland*, wherein he traveled to Liberia to explore that country's historical connections to our state. This documentary was lauded by the press, earning a regional Emmy as well as the National Headliner Award Best of Show and the National Edward R. Murrow Award. His documentary *East is East*, chronicling life growing up as a Black man on Maryland's Eastern Shore, earned him another National Headliner Award, and in 2024, Dr. Tooten was inducted into the Emmy Silver Circle Hall of Fame, recognizing his 25 years of significant contributions to the broadcasting industry.

Dr. Tim Tooten was a man who wore many hats. He was passionate about education, providing mentorship to young Black men at Perry Hall High School and dispensing wisdom in his broadcasting classes at Loyola University Maryland. He furthered his own education, earning degrees in theology and ministry while working full time and raising a family.

Rev. Dr. Tooten organized his own church, Harvest Christian Ministries, and devoted himself to spreading the good word in his retirement. He served on the board of the Maryland Bible Society, and in 2017, he penned a book, *Leading by Example: A Parental Guide to Teaching and Modeling Christian Faith at Home*, which married his twin joys of teaching and preaching.

Though Tim was taken from us far too soon, I find comfort in knowing that the Lord has called him home for a purpose greater than we can understand. I take heart in the knowledge that he awaits his loved ones in the Kingdom of Heaven, basking in the glory of the Almighty.

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN
HERO ST. ANN MAGI MINISTRY

HON. BETH VAN DUYN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Ms. VAN DUYN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, St. Ann Magi Ministry in Coppell. More than 30 years ago, St. Ann Catholic Parish began its Magi Ministry, giving 100 gifts to those who would have otherwise gone without. Over the years, the ministry has grown to be one of the most important parts of the parish's Christmas season. More than 3,400 children, seniors, seminarians, and families received Christmas gifts this year thanks to the generosity of parishioners.

Beginning the weekend before Thanksgiving, parish members can choose an ornament from a tree around the church. Each ornament contains a gift request from a child in the St. Ann community, residents of Hillcrest and Ewing Houses, as well as children from Blessed Sacrament. The volunteers at Magi Ministry collect, sort, and wrap the gifts before individually delivering them to their recipients.

My heartfelt thanks go out to St. Ann volunteers for spreading Christmas love and cheer throughout our community. They are a shining example of what makes North Texas great.

HONORING AFRICAN AMERICANS
IN LABOR DURING BLACK HIS-
TORY MONTH

HON. FRANK J. MRVAN

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 14, 2025

Mr. MRVAN. Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect and sincere admiration that I rise to celebrate Black History Month and its 2025 theme—African Americans and Labor. This year's theme reflects on the struggles and triumphs of the African American community in the workforce who have fought and continue