

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING RUBY JUANITA FLEMING BRIDGEFORTH AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 21, 2025

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, Ruby Juanita Fleming Bridgeforth is a retired executive from the United States Postal Service with 27 years of leadership experience in customer service, training, processing, and distribution. As the senior plant manager of the Central Florida District, she directed processing and distribution centers in Orlando, Sanford, and West Palm Beach. Ruby was instrumental in improving mail service to the Central Florida community by driving the district's performance ranking in the United States from No. 72 to No. 5 within three years. As a trailblazer, she was the first Black senior plant manager of the Central Florida District, the first postmaster/metro manager for Memphis, Tennessee, and the first Black female plant manager in the Orlando and Memphis processing and distribution centers.

Her education includes a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Music Education. She has also earned leadership development certificates from Eckerd College and Harvard Business School. Ruby has received numerous awards, including the Postmaster General Team award, two Vice President awards, and the Zeta Phi Beta Woman of the Year award. Ruby has also been featured in several publications for her accomplishments, including Jet, Grace, and Southern Women magazines. Her community service includes being the treasurer of the Osceola County Branch of the NAACP and a Golden Soror of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Delta Omicron Omega Chapter. Additional community outreach includes partnering with a few friends to provide care bags to the homeless.

Prior to her postal career, Ruby taught music at Cotton Plant Public Schools in Cotton Plant, Arkansas. Her love of teaching has continued as an Osceola County Public School substitute teacher, Sunday School teacher at St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church, and instructor at Mount Pleasant Bible Academy. She is married to Rev. Anthony C. Bridgeforth and they have three sons and two grandchildren. Her priorities are God, family, and "service to all mankind."

HONORING FIRE CAPTAIN BRET BUTLER

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 21, 2025

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Fire Captain Bret Butler,

a dedicated and courageous member of the Lake Pillsbury Fire Protection District. I have named Captain Butler as the California 4th District's Public Safety Hero of the Year for Lake County in recognition of his extraordinary selflessness, leadership, and unwavering commitment to protecting his community.

Captain Butler was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and raised in Walnut Creek, California. He graduated from Northgate High School before pursuing studies at the Controlled Data Institute in San Francisco. After spending much of his professional life in Concord, he retired to his cabin—now his permanent home—in the Rice Fork community of Lake Pillsbury.

Captain Butler has been a steadfast leader in the Lake Pillsbury Fire Protection District, where he has risen through the ranks from Firefighter to Fire Captain. In addition to his operational leadership, he serves as the Federal Excess Equipment Program coordinator with CalFire. He also demonstrated remarkable bravery during the 2018 Mendocino Complex Fire, aiding in firefighting efforts and the evacuation of a Hotshot crew. Within the community, he is widely regarded as the unofficial "Mayor" and "Real Estate Agent" of our Rice Fork community due to his deep-rooted involvement and dedication to the well-being of its residents. Captain Butler is happily married to his wife, Debra Butler.

Beyond his firefighting duties, Captain Butler has made countless contributions to the Lake Pillsbury community. He played a crucial role in procuring and installing mile marker signs along the 36-mile stretch of road in the Lake Pillsbury Basin, greatly improving emergency response times. He has also been a key advocate for evacuation route improvements, drone mapping projects, and defensible space initiatives, particularly for seniors and veterans. Additionally, he facilitated the donation of an ambulance and fire engine to the district and personally installed a solar system for Fire Station 2.

Mr. Speaker, Fire Captain Bret Butler's courage, leadership, and dedication to service have had a profound impact on his community. His selfless actions during the Mendocino Complex Fire and his ongoing contributions to public safety exemplify the very best of our first responders. It is with great honor and deep appreciation that we recognize him today.

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN HERO DONALD GRAVES

HON. BETH VAN DUYNE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 21, 2025

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Corporal Donald "Don" Graves, a Fort Worth resident and distinguished World War II veteran. Graves left high school in 1942 at just 17

years old to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps, inspired by his father's service. He served as a flamethrower in the Second Battalion of the 28th Marine Regiment of Iwo Jima.

Of the 335 Marines that landed on the island, only 18, including Graves, made it off. His strength and courage were displayed as he survived the intense, three-day long battle, climbing toward the top of Mount Suribachi. On the third day, Graves and his fellow Marines climbed to the summit before reaching the top and raising the U.S. flag.

Graves served for four years, leaving the service for civilian life after the war ended. It was in the heat of battle for Iwo Jima that he discovered his faith, leading him to serve in the ministry for 32 years.

As Graves celebrates his 100th birthday later this year, we honor his incredible journey. I thank Corporal Graves for his service and the lasting impact he has made on our country.

RECOGNIZING MR. ALEX J. WILSON

HON. BRUCE WESTERMAN

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 21, 2025

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding young leader, Alex J. Wilson, a student at Cass Job Corps in Ozark, Arkansas. Alex is currently enrolled in the Heavy Equipment Operations Pre-Apprentice Trade, where he has demonstrated exceptional leadership, service, and perseverance—qualities that embody the Cass Cougar spirit.

Alex's leadership extends far beyond the classroom. As the Student Government Association President and a Student Ambassador for the Youth-to-Youth initiative, he is a dedicated voice for his peers, advocating for their needs and championing opportunities for student success. Through the Youth-to-Youth program, Alex has worked to combat violence and drug use while promoting positive mental health on campus.

His servant-style leadership is evident in his commitment to both his fellow students and the broader community. As a member of the Cass Job Corps Fire Crew, Alex has trained extensively to serve and protect, further exemplifying his dedication to helping others. Recognizing the challenges new students face, he implemented a volunteer program with Needy Paws, a local animal shelter, providing students with an opportunity to ease stress and homesickness through service.

Alex's impact reaches beyond campus through his involvement in numerous community service projects. He has participated in a River Valley event honoring local veterans, served as Sergeant at Arms for Bumpers North Dorm, and was selected for the Cass Community Leadership Program. His commitment to excellence also earned him a spot in

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