

protecting our community's most vulnerable.

In addition to his law enforcement career, Detective Gachett is an ordained minister and a devoted follower of Jesus Christ. He is also a loving husband, father, and grandfather.

No one deserves retirement more than Jerry, but I know that he won't be retiring for real, as he has been sworn into the APD Reserves. I am sure we will continue to see him serving our community in his own special way.

On behalf of Ohio's 13th Congressional District, I congratulate and thank Detective Jerry Gachett on a storied career at the Akron Police Department and for over 31 years of outstanding service and devotion to our community and our country.

#### CELEBRATING EVA AND HERB PORTER AS COMMUNITY PILLARS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. RAMIREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as we celebrate Black History Month to uplift two of my constituents and pillars of the Hanover Park community, Eva and Herb Porter. Both have shared more than 40 years of love, leadership, and unwavering dedication to civic engagement.

Eva Porter is a beloved retired educator in our community. After 30 years of teaching, she has continued to shape young minds in and beyond the classroom.

Eva has served as a trustee of the Poplar Creek Library Board and as a board member for school district U-46. Her passion for service shines through her volunteer work with organizations like Kids Hope USA and the American Cancer Society.

Eva's passion and commitment to public service is matched only by her dear husband, Herb. Currently serving as a deputy mayor of Hanover Park, Herb Porter became the first-ever African-American Hanover Park trustee when he was elected in 2019. With nearly a decade of elected office, Herb is currently the longest serving African-American public official in the northwest suburban area.

He continues to serve his community in his roles on the governing board for the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County as well as the board of the Alignment Collaborative for Education.

□ 1045

Proud members of the DuPage NAACP, Eva and Herb Porter's legacy of service and uplifting diversity and equity have inspired countless community members to get involved in civic engagement, including their daughter, Dr. Chantelle Porter, who was just elected in 2022 as the first Black female judge in DuPage County.

While we think of being first and only, we know we still have a long way

to go to truly have parity and representation across this country, but the Porter family's extensive service to the Hanover Park community is a reminder of just how seriously our local communities take our responsibility to serve our neighbors and to do so with compassion and care.

Today, I rise to speak of their leadership, dedication, and exemplary service, which serves as a reminder to each of us here in Congress that we also have the very same responsibility to care for our neighbors and our working families, not special interests and unaccountable billionaires.

As we take the time to celebrate history, we are also reminded that we are making history every single day in these Chambers and back home in our districts. Let it be good history. Let it be history that we are proud of.

Our constituents, including Herb and Eva, are meeting this moment with the urgency it deserves, and they rightfully expect us to follow their lead. I know I will.

On behalf of Illinois' Third Congressional District on this 25th day of February, 2025, I commend Eva and Herb Porter for their lifelong commitment to modeling civic responsibility, community service, and courageous leadership.

Congratulations to Eva and Herb.

#### PROTECTING VETERANS IS NOT GOVERNMENT WASTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. HERNÁNDEZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HERNÁNDEZ. Mr. Speaker, during the past weeks, the Federal Government has been cruel to its workforce. It has offered deferred resignations. It has laid off employees. It has sent employees confusing information.

As Jorge Santiago-Rivera, a labor leader from the Department of Veterans Affairs on the island, has said: The truth is that, yes, we live under fear. We live under uncertainty.

I worry about the well-being of our Federal workers. I worry, in particular, about the well-being of the 13,000 Federal employees who reside in Puerto Rico, but I also worry about the thousands of veterans who rely on the VA for their healthcare needs in Puerto Rico. Why? Because the lack of structure and logic behind these cuts directly affects them.

As Mr. Santiago asks: If you lose 10 emergency workers from the ER, who helps the patients?

Unsurprisingly, the VA is now scrambling to deny deferred resignation requests. In the past, it has had to rehire workers that it laid off.

The VA is not the only Federal agency on the island affected by this chaotic, irresponsible, negligent program of Federal cuts. The IRS reportedly laid off around 200 workers. The National Park Service, the USDA, and the national Forest Service are also laying off employees.

Brenda Reyes Tomassini, a labor leader from the EPA, another agency affected, described it best: It is devastating, truly, a brutal level of anxiety.

What makes this even worse is the process. Some of these employees have worked for the Federal Government for 15 or 20 years. They transferred to new positions, so they appeared as if they were on probation and have been terminated. That is unacceptable.

Members of this Congress have not received accurate information about what is happening. I will be the first one to acknowledge that government waste exists. It exists at the Federal level, the State level, and the municipal level, but protecting our veterans is not government waste. Protecting our national parks and protecting our national forests, like El Yunque, is not government waste. Protecting the employees who work hard to ensure that millionaires and billionaires don't cheat on their taxes is not government waste. It is what government is for.

In the coming days, my office will be taking action. We will share resources for Federal employees so that they know their rights. We will host a tele-townhall to hear directly from affected workers. We will demand transparency from the agencies responsible for these layoffs.

I also urge the Government of Puerto Rico to step up to provide these workers the assistance that the government of Puerto Rico usually provides to workers who are laid off in the tourism or manufacturing sectors.

To the workers affected, I send a clear message: I know that being laid off is painful. It hurts your finances. It hurts your stability. It can even hurt your sense of self-worth, but let's be clear: You are not the problem. Your government is the problem. I see you, hear you, and will fight for you.

#### HONORING GEORGE WALTON WELLER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CLINE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor an extraordinary American, a true hero in every sense, George Walton Weller.

For 65 years, Mr. Weller has dedicated his life to the safety and well-being of his community through the Verona Volunteer Fire Company. Helping to found the fire company in 1959, he remains an active member to this day at age 91. His unwavering commitment to service and deep sense of duty are nothing short of inspiring.

Long before he answered the call as a firefighter, Mr. Weller bravely served our Nation as a member of the United States Air Force. Serving for 4 years during the Vietnam war, he defended the freedoms we hold dear.

Mr. Weller has strengthened his community in the generations of firefighters he has mentored and his example of dedication. Few can claim such a