

wife, Iris; to his children; and grandchildren and great-grandchildren; and to all who loved him. We pray that they will be consoled and comforted by an abiding faith and the Holy Spirit in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

RECOGNIZING OCTOBER 10, 2026, AS
NATIONAL INDEPENDENT COS-
TUME STORE DAY

HON. MIKE QUIGLEY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 24, 2026

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Saturday, October 10, 2026, as the inaugural National Independent Costume Store Day. Created by the National Costumers Association to celebrate independent costume stores across the country, this day recognizes the pivotal role these stores play in our communities.

Independent costume stores across the Nation will create their own celebrations, including customer appreciation events, costume showcases, behind-the-scenes tours, cosplay gatherings, theater partnerships, educational programs, charity fundraisers, and other activities that highlight what makes their businesses special.

This day celebrates independent costume stores' support for schools, theaters, performers, community events, local traditions, and creative expression. These neighborhood businesses are filled with creativity, expertise, history, and passion for making our communities stronger. Our own local family business, Chicago Costume Company, serves Chicagoland and beyond, helping bring local productions, celebrations, educational programs, and public events to life.

Small businesses like Chicago Costume Company are a pillar of our creative community, most recently supplying the "Pope Hats" for the Chicago White Sox. Not only do these endeavors keep manufacturing and design jobs local; they showcase our community to the world—Pope Leo XIV received his own Pope Hat from the Chicago Costume Company at the Vatican.

Mr. Speaker, I ask everyone to join me in recognizing National Independent Costume Store Day and thanking Chicago Costume Company for their commitment and service to the Chicago community.

RECOGNIZING DAVID WARM ON
HIS RETIREMENT AS MID-AMER-
ICA REGIONAL COUNCIL (MARC)
DIRECTOR

HON. EMANUEL CLEAVER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 24, 2026

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a deep sense of gratitude that I rise today to honor the lifelong public service career of Mr. David Warm, who has served as the Executive Director of the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) for 36 years. Let us take a moment to recognize this accomplished individual in Missouri's Fifth Congressional District who has worked to build better communities

for the people of Kansas City and beyond for nearly four decades.

A Southern California native, David earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science and economics from the University of California, Santa Barbara and later received a Master of Public Administration from the University of California, Riverside. As a Cookingham-Noll Fellow, David relocated to Kansas City in 1979 to learn about the ins and outs of local government and the opportunities found in city management. What was only meant to be a year of experience would mark the start of his distinguished career and lead to a life-long dedication to service in our community. David planted roots in the Midwest and took on the role as Assistant City Administrator of the City of Liberty and eventually became the City Administrator for the city.

After years of experience working in local government, David took his expertise to MARC, a nonprofit organization serving as a council of governments across the state line, where he joined as the Executive Director in 1990. Under David's selfless leadership, MARC grew from 50 to 160 staff members, a total of 9 counties, functioning with a budget of 20 percent more than what it once was. The organization has been fundamental in transforming the Kansas City metropolitan area and regional surroundings through its comprehensive solutions on questions regarding transportation, early education, and environment.

Throughout his 36-year tenure, David has faced challenges headstrong with patience and innovation. With an understanding of government and a deep respect for democracy, David grew the organization into a resource hub for cities, building trust and ambition and in turn, bridging collaboration among the many different governments MARC aids. An avid problem solver, David often sees issues as opportunities for growth and helps take what was once a mere idea into a reality. From taking on the management of more Head Start programs in the area to helping cities overcome the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, David led by listening to the issues that were raised and handling them through innovative approaches. As a testament to his invaluable work ethic and devotion to serving his community, he was named the Kansas Citian of the Year by the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce in 2020. Furthermore, his influence and impact did not go unnoticed when he received the President's Award from the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) in 2021.

Most recently, as a host of the FIFA World Cup 2026, Kansas City made its way to the global stage and welcomed the world. Its success, safety, and efficiency are the result of the collective action of many partners and cities built around a broader network made possible by MARC. Serving as a liaison between so many voices, David and his team have strengthened the foundation between the cities and coalitions while assisting them in reaching their goals in an effective and efficient manner. Beyond his role at MARC, David is active in many initiatives and civic groups, serving on nonprofit boards focusing on education, health care, and community development, among many more.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing David for his tremendous accomplishments, his commitment and tireless community service. As executive director for

36 years, David focused on ways that he could better his community, and his selfless spirit of determination is displayed throughout his career. His immense impact will continue through the multitude of lives he has impacted. On behalf of Missouri's 5th Congressional District, I wish David great joy and relaxation in his well-deserved retirement.

COLONEL EDWARD SHAMES POST
OFFICE BUILDING

SPEECH OF

HON. JENNIFER A. KIGGANS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 16, 2026

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 7365, which would designate the United States Post Office located at 1225 Kempsville Road in Virginia Beach as the Colonel Edward D. Shames Post Office Building.

Colonel Shames was a proud Virginian, a decorated World War II veteran, and a member of one of the most storied units in American military history: Easy Company of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. Colonel Shames enlisted in the Army in 1942 and volunteered to become a paratrooper.

On June 6, 1944, he parachuted into Normandy as part of the D-Day invasion. During the Normandy campaign, his leadership under fire earned him a battlefield commission, and he would go on to serve as an officer in Easy Company. He fought in Operation Market Garden, endured the brutal Battle of the Bulge at Bastogne, and participated in the Allied advance into Germany. For his courage and sacrifice in combat, Colonel Shames was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. The remarkable story of Easy Company would later become known around the world through Stephen Ambrose's Band of Brothers and the television series it inspired. But Colonel Shames' service to our country did not end with World War II.

He continued serving in the Army Reserve and in our national security community before retiring with the rank of colonel in 1973. He eventually made Virginia Beach his home, where he remained an active member of our community and a strong advocate for veterans and military remembrance. When Colonel Shames passed away in 2021 at the age of 99, he was the last surviving officer of Easy Company.

Mr. Speaker, in Hampton Roads, we understand that the freedoms we enjoy today were secured by generations of Americans who answered the call to serve. Colonel Edward D. Shames was one of those Americans. By placing his name on the Kempsville Road Post Office, we can ensure that his story, and the courage, sacrifice, and patriotism of the Greatest Generation he represented, continues to be remembered by the Virginia Beach community for generations to come.

I am proud that this legislation has received bipartisan support, and I thank my colleagues for helping us bring it to the House floor.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 7365 and help us provide this lasting tribute to a distinguished Virginia veteran and American hero.

HONORING THE LIFE OF ERNEST
N. "ERNIE" LAFLAMME, JR.

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 24, 2026

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join a grateful Chicopee community in mourning the loss of a true giant in the City of Chicopee, Ernest N. "Ernie" Laflamme, Jr.

Often referred to as the "Dean" of Chicopee, Ernie affectionately earned this distinction after faithfully serving the city for more than five decades, spanning 12 mayoral administrations and serving as both Assessor and then as Treasurer. A dedicated public servant, Ernie understood that holding public office is a privilege and that earning the trust of the people you serve should never be taken for granted. For years, Ernie was a constant presence in City Hall for residents and public servants alike, serving as a trusted source of wisdom, institutional knowledge, and friendship.

Beyond his work in public service, Ernie was a devout Catholic and a steadfast believer in giving back to his community. From mentoring young people through the Boy Scouts and supporting Sunshine Village, to his involvement with the Knights of Columbus and the Chicopee Chamber of Commerce, and his unrelenting support for our veterans, there is not a corner of the city that has not benefited from Ernie's efforts. While the list of charitable causes is too numerous to name, one thing remained constant: Ernie lived a life defined by service to others. Few have given more of themselves to the community he cared for so deeply and felt privileged to call home.

While his passing leaves a profound void in the city, I have no doubt that Ernie's legacy will live on not only through the generations of public servants he inspired, but through his children, grandchildren, and the generations of Laflammes who will carry forward the values of faith, family, and service that guided his life.

I thank Ernie's family for sharing Ernie with us for all these years. The City of Chicopee and all of western Massachusetts are better off because of Ernie's extraordinary life of service. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the extraordinary life of Ernest N. Laflamme, Jr., and extending our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and the entire Chicopee community.

RECOGNIZING THE INTER-
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
SPELLING AS COMMUNICATION

HON. JAMES R. WALKINSHAW

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 24, 2026

Mr. WALKINSHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the International Association for Spelling as Communication, known as I-ASC, for its work supporting nonspeaking individuals and their families and advancing communication access, inclusion, agency, and autonomy.

Founded in 2019, I-ASC is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to advance communication access for nonspeaking individuals

through training, education, advocacy, and research. The organization brings together nonspeaking self-advocates, families, practitioners, researchers, and allies around the shared goal of expanding opportunities for individuals who cannot reliably use speech as their primary means of communication.

I-ASC supports augmentative and alternative communication, with a particular focus on spelling and typing. The organization also provides practitioner training in Spelling to Communicate, or S2C, a methodology developed to teach nonspeaking individuals to communicate by pointing to letters.

Central to I-ASC's work is a belief that communication access can open doors to greater participation in education, employment, relationships, and community life. Its programs seek to ensure that nonspeaking, minimally speaking, and unreliably speaking individuals have opportunities to communicate and exercise greater agency in their own lives.

I especially commend I-ASC for elevating the perspectives of nonspeaking individuals themselves. The organization's Nonspeaking Leadership Council provides nonspeaking adults with a formal role advising I-ASC's leadership and helping shape its work. This commitment reflects an important principle for all of us who work in public service: policies and programs affecting people with disabilities should be informed by their experiences and perspectives.

Here in Northern Virginia and across the country, families of people with disabilities are powerful advocates for their loved ones. Organizations like I-ASC help build communities where families can find resources, education, and connections while working toward a future in which individuals with disabilities can participate more fully in every aspect of community life.

As we continue working to make our schools, workplaces, public spaces, and institutions more accessible, we must remember that accessibility includes communication. Every individual deserves dignity, respect, and meaningful opportunities to participate in the decisions and communities that shape their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the International Association for Spelling as Communication and the nonspeaking individuals, families, practitioners, advocates, and community members who contribute to its work. I wish I-ASC continued success as it works to advance communication access and inclusion for nonspeaking people.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY
OF MR. BRUCE JOHN

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 24, 2026

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the life of a beloved local musician from Connecticut's 2nd District, Mr. Bruce John who sadly passed away on June 29, 2026. Mr. John lived in downtown Storrs, Connecticut, for over 70 years and, in that time, he became a highly sought after, revered community musician. Since the 1960s, Mr. John has performed in coffee houses, outdoor festivals,

schools, senior centers, and at countless folk events with both his guitar and sweet voice. As the last troubadour of Willimantic, as he was known, he has provided Eastern Connecticut with more than the gift of fine music, but also a life dedicated to service to others and selfless philanthropy.

Mr. John grew up in Mansfield, Connecticut, graduated from E.O. Smith High School in 1969, and attended Eastern Connecticut State University. He started his musical career in elementary school with a memorable, rousing performance of "Blue Suede Shoes" at the school's talent show. From that point on, he was hooked on performing for audiences big and small, who never stopped applauding his charisma and joy on stage. Despite that heady success, he stayed down to earth. He remained closely connected with his family, friends and neighbors in Eastern Connecticut despite rubbing elbows with world renowned musical stars.

Mr. John's authentic brush with stardom originated when he cofounded the hallowed music venue, The Shaboo Inn, which hosted local artists and world-renowned giants like Aerosmith, the Police, Blondie, and Miles Davis until its closing in 1982. He also performed as the "Singasaurus" in The Kidsville Kuckoo Revue, providing family-friendly entertainment around Tolland County since he founded it in 1989. He was a part of other bands as well including The Gas Company, Tonight Only, Dinosaurs After Dark, and The Bruce John Genre Jam. Mr. John was not only part of the cultural life of his community as a talented musician, but he prepared the stage for others to enrich the lives of his neighbors both young and old.

Mr. John was able to convert his musical and entrepreneurial talents to benefit multiple local charities. Mr. John founded the Bread Box Folk Music Theater in Willimantic with his wife, Therese, to raise funds for the Covenant Soup Kitchen. So far, the theater has raised over \$275,000 since its creation in 2009 to benefit the soup kitchen. He also ran benefit dances for 20 years with his band, the "Dinosaurs After Dark", to pay the rent of the Project Hope Homeless Shelter in Willimantic. He has raised over \$175,000 for Project Hope, while personally giving to many other local Eastern Connecticut charities. These a just a small sample of the substantial help he donated to his neighbors in need and in crisis, that made such a positive difference in their lives. On September 27, 2026, there will be a memorial concert in his beloved town of Willimantic, with some of his musical friends and colleagues in front of hundreds and hundreds of fans to pay tribute to his extraordinary, inspiring life.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me and the people of Willimantic to express our deep admiration for Mr. Bruce John's tremendous life of service. May he serve as an inspiration to us all on how we might use our special gifts to serve one another. Join me also in expressing our deepest condolences to his wife, Therese John; his siblings, Kim and Gary; his daughters, Emma and Mia; his sons-in-law, Sean and Joshua; and his grandchildren.