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 INTERNATIONAL 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 perfomned 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.