

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.

RECOGNIZING DETECTIVE WAN  
LEE

**HON. BETH VAN DUYNÉ**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 24, 2026*

Ms. VAN DUYNÉ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Detective Wan Lee upon his retirement after more than 31 years of dedicated service in law enforcement, including more than 30 years serving the Grapevine community.

Detective Lee began his law enforcement career in 1995 with the Royse City Police Department before joining the Grapevine Police Department in 1996. Throughout his distinguished career with the Grapevine Police Department, Detective Lee served in Patrol and took on numerous specialized assignments. He served as a Field Training Officer, Firearms Instructor, and Defensive Tactics Instructor, helping train and mentor fellow officers. He also served on the SWAT Team and later joined the Motor Unit, where he became a certified Accident Reconstructionist.

In 2014, Detective Lee began serving as a Task Force Officer with the Drug Enforcement Administration. During his time with the DEA, he became a certified member of the agency's Special Response Team and served on its high-risk warrant team.

For more than three decades, Detective Lee has demonstrated professionalism, dedication, courage, and an unwavering commitment to protecting and serving others. His willingness to pursue specialized training, take on challenging assignments, and mentor fellow law enforcement professionals has left a lasting impact on the Grapevine Police Department and the communities he has served.

As Detective Wan Lee begins his well-earned retirement, I extend my sincere gratitude for his many years of service to our community and congratulate him on an exceptional career in law enforcement.

RECOGNIZING JAY BLOMMEL OF  
WREC

**HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 24, 2026*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Jay Blommel, an OPC Lineman with Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative (WREC), for his outstanding service as part of WREC's second mission supporting the Light Up Navajo Project. Through Light Up Navajo, skilled utility professionals volunteer their time and expertise to help bring electricity to Navajo families who have lived without power for generations. As a lineman, Mr. Blommel put his specialized skills to work performing the challenging, hands-on work necessary to help extend electrical service to families in need. For most Americans, reliable electricity is part of everyday life. For families who have gone without it, however, turning on the power can be transformational. Electricity provides light after dark, allows food and medicine to be safely refrigerated, and provides greater safety, comfort, and opportunity.

Mr. Blommel's willingness to leave his own community and use his professional skills in

service to others embodies the cooperative spirit at its very best. His hard work helped advance a mission that is not simply about connecting electrical lines—it is about connecting families to greater opportunity and a better quality of life. I commend Mr. Jay Blommel for his professionalism, hard work, and commitment to serving others. His efforts reflect great credit upon WREC and our entire community.

HONORING THE LIFE AND MEM-  
ORY OF MYRA ANN LANDRESS  
JONES

**HON. AARON BEAN**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 24, 2026*

Mr. BEAN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and memory of Myra Ann Landress Jones, a beloved native of Fernandina Beach, Florida, who passed away on September 8, 2026, at the age of 86.

Born on June 6, 1940, to Raymond and Inez Landress, Myra was a proud member of the Fernandina Beach High School graduating class of 1958 and a lifelong pillar of our local community. Her faith and community spirit shone brightly through her active membership at Springhill Baptist Church and her passionate support as a University of Florida Gator Booster.

Myra dedicated decades of her life to public service, retiring from the Federal government after distinguished work as a legal assistant with the United States Attorney in New Hampshire, the Florida Veterans Administration, and the Federal Aviation Administration. Never one to slow down, she continued serving Nassau County by working for the School Board of Nassau County and Fernandina Beach Realty for two decades before her well-earned retirement in 2018 at the age of 78.

Above all else, Myra's heart belonged to her family. She was a devoted mother, aunt, grandmother, great-grandmother, and surrogate grandmother whose warmth, guidance, and love enriched multiple generations. She leaves behind a remarkable legacy in her sons, Benjamin and David; her daughter, Leslie; her extended family; and a growing lineage of grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will forever cherish her memory.

Mr. Speaker, Myra Ann Landress Jones lived a life defined by quiet dedication to her country, her community, and her loved ones. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring her memory and extending our deepest condolences to her family during this time.

RECOGNIZING GENENTECH

**HON. KEVIN MULLIN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 24, 2026*

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Genentech, whose global headquarters is in my hometown of South San Francisco, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary and to honor its profound impact on the biotechnology industry, scientific innovation, and the lives of patients across the globe.

As the world's first biotechnology company, Genentech has been an industry pioneer since

its founding in 1976. The company's 50-year history began with a single phone call between venture capitalist Robert A. Swanson and biochemist Dr. Herbert W. Boyer. Swanson had heard about Boyer's role in the invention of recombinant DNA technology, research which would soon prove living cells could be programmed to produce life-changing medicines. By the end of the three-hour conversation, the two had conceived a way to commercialize recombinant DNA technology, and Genentech was born. After months of experiments, the team of scientists at Genentech successfully synthesized somatostatin. Even though the experiment had no commercial consequences, it confirmed that recombinant DNA technology could be used to make human proteins and established an important precedent at the company of letting science lead business. Equipped with new knowledge, confidence, and funding, Genentech scientists went on to become the first team to synthesize human insulin, medicine that has changed millions of lives since.

In the decades that followed, Genentech continued to lead. Its scientists developed the first monoclonal antibody approved in the United States for the treatment of cancer, a therapy for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma that helped establish antibody-based treatment as a pillar of modern oncology. Genentech introduced the original HER2-targeted therapy for metastatic breast cancer. In doing so, it launched the first therapeutic antibody paired with a required companion diagnostic test, an innovation that helped realize the promise of precision medicine by ensuring the suitable medication met the correct patient. Furthermore, Genentech introduced the first B-cell depleting therapy approved for both relapsing and primary progressive forms of multiple sclerosis, offering hope to patients with a form of the disease that had long lacked approved treatment options. The company's legacy of firsts reflects Genentech's sustained, decades-long institutional commitment to solving problems that others may have judged too difficult, too risky, or too small a market to pursue.

Such commitment continues today at an extraordinary scale. Genentech invests \$15 billion annually in research and development, representing one of the largest R&D budgets in the biotechnology industry. Its scientists contribute their experimentation and innovation in five therapeutic areas: Oncology-Hematology, Neurology, Ophthalmology, Immunology, and Cardiovascular, Renal and Metabolism. Genentech is a proud member of the scientific community and is committed to sharing its discoveries by encouraging its researchers to publish their findings.

Genentech medicines have received 43 FDA Breakthrough Therapy Designations, a distinction reserved for treatments that show substantial improvement over existing therapies for serious conditions. 46 Genentech medicines appear on the World Health Organization's Model List of Essential Medicines, the WHO's own register of the medicines judged most effective, safe, and necessary within a health system. The company has developed more than 40 FDA-approved medicines for serious and life-threatening diseases. Today, it sponsors 250 clinical trials in the United States with 66 investigational medicines currently in development, a pipeline that represents the next generation of potential treatments for patients still waiting for better options.