

in the Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy working on cardiac and molecular biology research. She has numerous publications in medical journals and textbooks and has received recognition for her early work on DNA sequencing and cloning.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Commissioner González-Sánchez for her work ensuring high-quality care and services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

HONORING FIRST LIEUTENANT  
VERNELLA WELLS FOR HER  
DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT  
TO THIS COUNTRY

**HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 15, 2012*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a remarkable young woman, Lieutenant Vernella N. Wells of Clarksdale, Mississippi. Born to the proud parents of Troy and Arcola Holmes, Wells has dedicated her life to being a beacon of service to her community and country.

First Lieutenant Wells began her military career in August 2003 as a Private First Class in the Mississippi Army National Guard, assigned to the 155th Heavy Brigade Combat Team in Tupelo, Mississippi. Immediately after graduating high school, she was sent to Basic Training followed by Advanced Individual Training in Fort Lee, Virginia, before serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom from September 2004–January 2006.

Upon returning from Iraq, she enrolled at the University of Mississippi and joined their Army ROTC program, where she received a Bachelor's of Science degree in Exercise Science.

In 2010, Wells was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Mississippi Army National Guard and is currently assigned to the Adjutant General's Branch, where she is the Strength Manager and Company Executive Officer for the 155th Brigade Combat Team of Tupelo, Mississippi.

She is responsible for the overall readiness of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program in North Mississippi. Wells is also spearheading the development of a program that is designed to bring local community resources and volunteers in to help enrich the lives of the Citizen Soldiers on and off duty.

In addition to commitment towards her country, Wells is also very active in her community. Her humanitarian work has included; volunteering at the Veterans Administration Nursing Home, Baptist Memorial HealthPlex, Baptist Memorial Out-Patient Physical Therapy Clinic, United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County Food Pantry, the Special Olympics, Habitat for Humanity fundraising, and just recently as team leader for the "Big Event" community wide volunteer project. In addition, Wells is currently pursuing a MBA with a concentration in Healthcare Administration.

Lieutenant Wells has also garnered multiple awards and decorations from her tireless efforts in the National Guard. Some of these honors include the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal with Campaign

Star, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with "M" Device Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Mississippi Medal of Efficiency, Mississippi War Medal, and the Mississippi Longevity Medal (1 Oak Leaf Cluster).

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing 1st Lieutenant Vernella N. Wells for her dedication and commitment to this nation and her community.

TRIBUTE TO ERICA EDWARD

**HON. HEATH SHULER**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 15, 2012*

Mr. SHULER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the members of my Congressional Staff who have served with me over the past six years while I have been in office. A Member of Congress' most important responsibility is to provide exceptional constituent services and my Staff is second to none in providing the best assistance to everyone in our District. I take great pride in the work that each one has done on my behalf and on behalf of everyone in the 11th Congressional District of North Carolina.

Each District Staff member has shown a strong sense of dedication in meeting the needs of each and every one of our constituents. They often go well beyond the call to make sure each constituent is treated fairly and respectfully by our government agencies and that they receive appropriate resolution. I owe a debt of gratitude to each one of them for the support and friendship which they have shown me while I have served in Congress.

Erica Edwards has served as a member of my District staff since October of 2008. Erica provided valuable guidance to individuals seeking assistance from the Social Security Administration. Erica's background working with the Department of Social Services at the county level provided our constituents with an additional level of expertise and hands-on experience to effectively serve a broader spectrum of constituents in their greatest time of need.

Erica should be proud of the service she has provided to our District and country. It has been an honor to serve with Erica and as I retire from office I wish her the very best in the future. Western North Carolina is a better place because of her efforts and I will cherish the memories of serving with Erica and the team by my side.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing and thanking Erica Edwards for her hard work on behalf of all of Western North Carolina and to wish her continued success in her future endeavors.

HONORING MRS. NANCY PENN  
PENSON

**HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 15, 2012*

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the life of Mrs. Nancy Penn Penson, a longtime lover

of the arts and an acclaimed tennis player. Mrs. Penson, a Dallas native, passed away on Sunday, October 21, 2012 at the age of 88. Mrs. Penson is survived by her husband Lieutenant John G. Penson, three daughters, Annie Vreeland, Suki Jarzemsky, and Read Gendler, and five grandchildren.

Mrs. Penson was highly respected and well known throughout the Dallas community. She graduated with a Degree in Classics from Wellesley College in 1945. Her love for the arts was ignited at an early age when her mother would take her to the symphony. Mrs. Penson held numerous leadership positions such as co-founder of the Dallas Tennis Association, President of the Junior League, and board member of the Dallas Bach Society, the New Dallas Conservatory, and the Southern Methodist University Meadows School of Arts.

In addition to her passion for the arts and her many philanthropic efforts, Mrs. Penson was an accomplished tennis player. She was nationally ranked #1 in Senior Women's Tennis and was inducted into the Texas Tennis Hall of Fame in 2002.

Mr. Speaker, I am saddened to lose such an integral member of the Dallas community. Her selfless contributions to arts and charity groups have touched the lives of many. While the Dallas community will certainly miss Mrs. Penson, her memory will live on in the hearts and minds of those whose lives she has touched over the years.

HONORING BLAKELY WHILDEN

**HON. HEATH SHULER**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 15, 2012*

Mr. SHULER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the members of my Congressional Staff who have served with me over the past six years while I have been in office. A Member of Congress' most important responsibility is to provide exceptional constituent services and my team is second to none in providing the best assistance to all in our District. My Washington, D.C. office is also tasked with researching, processing, analyzing, and making recommendations on an infinite number of reports, policies, and legislation. I could not ask for a more talented or dedicated team, and I take great pride in the work that each staff member has done not only on my behalf, but also on behalf of the 11th Congressional District of North Carolina and the United States.

My team has shown a strong sense of dedication to meeting the needs of our constituency. I owe a debt of gratitude to each one of them for the support and friendship they have shown me during my six years of service in the Congress.

Blakely Whilden was the Field Director for my first campaign in 2006. Following the campaign she served as a member of my D.C. staff for much of my first term. Blakely helped manage and organize the office, and always with efficiency and friendliness. Having grown up in the 11th Congressional District, Blakely was proud to help represent her hometown District in our nation's Capitol. She was especially passionate about issues surrounding higher education and focused on policies that would help to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality, affordable education.

Blakely should be proud of the service she has provided to our District and country. It has been an honor to serve with her and as I retire from office I wish her the very best in the future. Western North Carolina is a better place because of her efforts and I will cherish the memories of serving with Blakely and the team by my side.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing and thanking Blakely Whilden for her hard work on behalf of all of Western North Carolina and to wish her continued success in her future endeavors.

J.C. BURNHAM—TEXAN TO THE BONE

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2012

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a dear friend, JC Burnham of Liberty, Texas. A fine businessman, rancher, husband, father, friend and devoted family man, who spent his entire life serving his community while striving to make others happy. The City of Liberty and, indeed, the entire state of Texas lost a dedicated community leader, as well as friend, on October 30, 2012.

JC was born December 15, 1937, in Houston, Texas. He was truly a remarkable Texan who achieved extraordinary things in his career and for his community. Hard work and love of his community earned him enduring respect amongst the many touched by his deeds. It is an honor to recognize the great contributions that JC made to the city of Liberty, Liberty County, and the great State of Texas.

As a child, JC began his working life at Stubbs Grocery Store. In high school he was both a good student and athlete. He went on to attend College at my alma mater, the University of Houston. After graduation, JC got his foot in the door in the auto industry by working in the mailroom at General Motors. Through JC's hard work and dedication he held eleven different positions within General Motors, eventually owning his own dealership.

In 1973, he purchased Mearns Chevrolet in Liberty, Texas, a close-knit city near Houston. For over 30 years, his family owned business, thrived. He even added an Oldsmobile-Cadillac and a Buick-Pontiac-GMC store. JC was a man of true character and a Liberty resident for over 39 years, his Texas spirit and love of the community made him a natural promoter of Liberty, Texas.

Not only was JC a dedicated businessman, he also had a long career in public service. Throughout the years, he assisted and was recognized by numerous boards and organizations. He was a past board member of the Magnolia Ridge Country Club, Texas 4H Youth Development Foundation, Liberty Dayton Hospital, Liberty County Central Appraisal District and the Sam Rayburn Municipal Power Agency.

Always understanding the importance of education and our nation's youth, JC was a life time supporter of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Trinity Valley Exposition and 4H Alumni Association. He served and supported the Liberty-Dayton Chamber of Commerce, Liberty Rotary Club, 100 Club,

Liberty Elks Club, Liberty County Texas Farm Bureau, Texas Thoroughbred Association and Southwest Cattle Raisers Association. He started the Burnham Classic Golf Tournament which donated over \$450,000 for South Liberty State Center/Tri-County Services. The list of this model citizen's accomplishments will have lasting effects on the city of Liberty and surrounding areas. It is my hope that he will be remembered as a true visionary and strong community supporter, and that others will follow his lead.

My thoughts are with the love of JC's life, Kathleen—his wife of 21 years. They shared the same passion for their community, their farm and their love of slow race horses. Last spring, I visited JC at St. Luke's in Houston and I observed Kathleen in the caretaker role as she poured out her love, spirit and fight for JC. The passing of JC has left a son and daughter in mourning of their father—Bruce Burnham and Cyrese Jezek. His memory will live on, in the many lives he touched along the way.

On the evening of November 4, 2012, hundreds of Liberty, Texas residents waited in line at the First United Methodist Church of Liberty to pay their respects to the family of this honorable man. JC was a loyal friend to me, and although I am saddened by his loss, I feel very fortunate for the time and friendship we shared. He will be remembered by many as a devoted community leader, a genuine friend and a great Texan.

And that's just the way it is.

IN MEMORY OF LIZ IRWIN OF MENDOCINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2012

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Liz Irwin, one of the Mendocino Coast's most outstanding community leaders, who passed away October 23, 2012, leaving an enduring legacy in the fields of rural health care and the needs of senior citizens.

Born on September 5, 1919 in Fort Pierre, South Dakota, Liz grew up in South Dakota, went to Minnesota State College and then to Colorado State College of Education, where she met her husband of 70 years, Horace "Ace" Irwin. The couple moved to southern California where Ms. Irwin received a master's degree in speech at California State University Northridge.

Liz was a teacher in Northridge and Long Beach before she and Ace retired to the Mendocino Coast in 1971. She immediately became an inspirational and dynamic force for change and social justice in this rural coastal community, always with a twinkle in her eyes. Over the years she tackled tough issues, serving as the director of the Bea Erikson Senior Center for seven years to ensure seniors received the services they needed. She was also on the Mendocino Coast District Hospital Board of Directors. One of her crowning achievements was the initiation of Health Watch, a group that persuaded the County Board of Supervisors to maintain health care on the coast by creating the Mendocino Coast Clinics, where she was the first Chair of the Board of Directors, continuing until 2004.

Liz motivated others with her sense of humor and radical, feminist spirit as she participated in the Gray Panthers, the "Do-Gooders" annual holiday luncheon benefitting the local food banks and Old Broads for Peace. Many on the coast remember Liz for the many years she authored her inspirational "Coasting" column in the Mendocino Beacon and her childhood reminiscences in her book, "Home of the Heart." Liz loved her small town upbringing in South Dakota and told her family she never felt entirely at home again until she moved to the Mendocino Coast.

The Mendocino community showed its love and respect for Liz by honoring her as Grand Marshal in both the Mendocino Fourth of July and the Fort Bragg Paul Bunyan Days Parades.

She is survived by Ace, whom she referred to as the "joint tenant" in her newspaper columns, by her children, Bill Irwin, an actor based in New York, his wife Martha Roth, Patrick Irwin in Montreal and Nan Irwin, also living in New York, as well as two grandsons.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, please join me in recognizing and paying tribute to a friend, outstanding community member and role model, Liz Irwin.

HONORING EPSILON KAPPA KAPPA CHAPTER OF OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY, INCORPORATED FOR CONTINUED SERVICE TO THEIR COMMUNITY

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2012

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Epsilon Kappa Kappa Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated. Chartered in 1994, the Epsilon Kappa Kappa Chapter has been committed to providing public service to Madison County, Mississippi and surrounding areas.

Epsilon Kappa Kappa Chapter has executed a number of ongoing service projects, including community picnics, providing school supplies to area schools, and working with Habitat for Humanity to build homes for families in need. In addition, the Epsilon Kappa Kappa Chapter has orchestrated an annual scholarship boat ride to benefit surrounding residents. Finally, this chapter has been a ray of hope for many low income families during the holiday season by providing aid to the residents.

Epsilon Kappa Kappa Chapter has been named the "Chapter of the Year" for two consecutive years by Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated, State of Mississippi Organization, for superior service to the fraternity and their communities.

In 2011, Omega Psi Phi fraternity celebrated 100 years of service at the local, national, and international levels. Epsilon Kappa Kappa Chapter are men of character and great faith. They envisioned a brotherhood founded upon Manhood, Scholarship, Perseverance, and Up-lift.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Epsilon Kappa Kappa Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated for their continued dedication towards serving their community.