

Walt Ruckel was a true Northwest Floridian, born and raised on the Gulf Coast. After graduating from high school, he attended Davidson College and North Georgia College as part of the U.S. Army Specialized Training Reserve Program. Upon completion of his training, Mr. Ruckel entered the U.S. Army Air Corps, where he served as an airplane mechanic before being honorably discharged in 1947. In 1948, he graduated from Soule Business College in New Orleans and returned to his native Northwest Florida where he began a distinguished career in the Northwest Florida business community. Mr. Ruckel took a position working as a bank teller and bookkeeper at Valparaiso State Bank in Valparaiso, Florida, where he quickly established himself, rising to become Assistant Vice President in 1950 before becoming President of the bank in 1951. Mr. Ruckel continued to serve at the bank as Chairman of the Board until 2004.

Mr. Ruckel's immense pride in his local community inspired him to pursue a career in real estate and property development. In 1955, he founded Ruckel Properties, which continues to serve the Northwest Florida community today. Through Mr. Ruckel's leadership, Ruckel Properties has developed countless homes and businesses in Northwest Florida and has been a driving force in the development of the cities of Niceville and Valparaiso.

In addition to his work in the Northwest Florida business community, Walt Ruckel was also a noted civic leader. He was a founding member of the Niceville-Valparaiso Rotary Club, where he served as President from 1954 to 1955 and was twice named the club's "Man of the Year." Mr. Ruckel truly believed in the value of community service, and he remained active in the Rotary Club until his passing, helping to organize and volunteer at the club's latest fundraiser. His steadfast dedication to serving his community extended beyond the Rotary Club, and he was active in many other civic organizations, including the local Chamber of Commerce, United Way and Boy Scouts of America.

Northwest Florida is also home to numerous military installations, and Mr. Ruckel was a strong supporter of the servicemen and women and their families who form such an integral part of our local community. Mr. Ruckel served as Chairman of the Air Force Armament Museum Foundation, where he helped lead a successful effort to raise more than \$1 million for the construction of the Air Force Armament Museum, located at Eglin Air Force Base.

All those who had the fortune of meeting Walt Ruckel were blessed by his kindness and generosity, and his impact on Northwest Florida will never be forgotten. To some, Walt Ruckel will be remembered as an invaluable member and leader of the Northwest Florida community, to others, an honorable member and strong supporter of our Armed Forces. To his friends and family, Walt Ruckel will most fondly be remembered as a loving and committed family man.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, it gives me great pride to honor the life of Walt Ruckel and his living legacy. Northwest Florida has truly suffered a great loss with his passing, and my wife Vicki joins me in sending our most heartfelt condolences to the entire Ruckel family.

IN MEMORY OF DELORES THOMAS  
HADNOTT

**HON. AL GREEN**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 25, 2012*

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to honor the memory of a noble public servant and spiritual leader, Delores Thomas Hadnott. With singular dedication, Ms. Hadnott devoted her life to faithfully serving her community.

Ms. Hadnott was born in Arcadia, LA on December 31, 1951. Her parents instilled within her the importance of education and the drive to help others. In 1972, she received her B.A. degree in Sociology from Grambling State University in only three years, while serving as salutatorian, class president and a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

After Ms. Hadnott completed Management Training at the University of Houston, she started her thirty-six year career with the American Red Cross—Greater Houston Area Chapter. Ms. Hadnott excelled in her position, becoming the office director of the southeast branch office in 1987. Ms. Hadnott worked tirelessly to advocate for the betterment of Houston and under-served individuals.

In addition to her lifelong service in her community, Ms. Hadnott acted in several roles at the Mount Carmel Missionary Baptist Church. Through her unselfish hard work and virtue, she eventually became the assistant church secretary, a member of the finance committee, program coordinator for the Mission Society and a Sunday school instructor.

Ms. Hadnott's leadership and community service have been consistently recognized by her colleagues. Mayor Lee Brown honored her on May 9, 2002 when he proclaimed it Delores Hadnott Day in the City of Houston. In 2006, she received the 42nd Annual Founders' Day, Sojourner Truth Crystal and Professional awards. In 2009, I had the honor to present her with the 2009 Congressional Certificate of Special Recognition.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Delores Thomas Hadnott will be missed dearly by her daughter, Crystal Denise, son, Lawrence Oliver, stepson, Lawrence Isaiah, grandson, Ashton Josiah, and daughter-in-law, Shawkanna. She will be remembered in the City of Houston as a dedicated public servant and valued community leader. May she rest in the peace she has so richly earned.

RECOGNIZING MASTER  
AGRICULTURIST DALE HINES

**HON. RON KIND**

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 25, 2012*

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to congratulate a second-generation dairy farmer from my home district in western Wisconsin. Dale Hines is a hard-working man from the beautiful small town of Ellsworth who was recently recognized as a Master Agriculturist. This distinction, awarded by the magazine Wisconsin Agriculturist, recognizes Wisconsin farmers who not only display an ability to raise crops or livestock, but those who also

dedicate significant time to their family, communities, churches, farm organizations, and other local efforts.

I'm proud to be from an area so rich with agricultural history—an area which celebrates and appreciates the hard-working men and women who work on our farms, raising crops and livestock, helping to put food on our tables. The family farm is an important American institution, and Dale Hines and the rest of the Hines family are an embodiment of that spirit. As a child, Dale grew up surrounded by farming. Even at a young age, he spent his time milking his family's 30 Holstein cows along with his older brothers—a chore which became a full-time career for Dale after graduating from Ellsworth High School in 1977. Today, the Hines Ranch, which was recognized in 1987 as the Wisconsin Conservation Farm of the Year, has grown exponentially. They cultivate 810 acres of land and milk 80 cows, a herd which produces more than 28,000 pounds of milk per cow.

However, despite their farm's growth amidst the ever-changing world of farming, one thing has never changed for the Hineses: the importance of the family-run operation. Although only Dale's family lives in the farmhouse, the entire extended family is still very much involved with the farm's day-to-day operations. Everyone helps out in whatever way they can, whether it's helping with the planting and harvesting of the crops, constructing all of the farm's buildings, or keeping track of the books—a task which Dale's 85-year-old mother Joyce still does to this day.

The Hines family is truly an example to follow, both due to the success of their farm and the importance they place on family. It is with great pride that I rise today and congratulate Dale Hines, a dedicated father, farmer, and citizen, on having received proper recognition of the hard work that he and his family have put forth over the last half-century. He is truly deserving of the title of Master Agriculturist, and I wish him and the rest of the Hines family all of the best in the future.

IN RECOGNITION OF STEPHANNIE  
FINLEY IN HONOR OF HER SERVICE  
TO THE COLORADO SPRINGS  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**HON. DOUG LAMBORN**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 25, 2012*

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Stephanie Finley, the outgoing President of the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce Governmental Affairs and Public Policy Division.

Stephannie began her career working for a small food distribution business that served Peterson AFB, the Air Force Academy, and Ft. Carson. After the business was sold, Stephannie entered the world of politics.

She has extensive experience including: working for the White House Advance Team in the early 1990s, serving as a staffer to the Colorado General Assembly, the Chief of Staff for Colorado's 3rd Congressional District, the Director of State Government Relations for the University of Colorado, and the Chief of Staff to Lt. Governor Jane Norton.

Stephannie first joined the Chamber in February of 2006. She has been a passionate and

dedicated servant to the Front Range of Colorado, and I extend her my sincerest thanks and wish her the best of success in her future service.

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“UNBROKEN”

**HON. TED POE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 25, 2012*

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on a fateful day in May 1943, bombardier Louis Zamperini and his fellow airmen were flying in a B-24 over the Pacific Ocean on a reconnaissance mission. The plane fell apart mid-flight, crashing into the middle of ocean and killing all but three of the 11-man crew.

In the midst of the catastrophe and chaos, Louis along with his pilot Russell Allen Phillips and tail gunner Francis McNamara, found a small rubber life raft. All three avoided sharks, dodged bullets from Japanese aircraft and devised ways to catch rainwater, fish and sometimes birds.

After 33 days on the raft, Francis McNamara died. The chance of rescue for the other two men seemed bleak, until day 47, when their raft finally made landfall in the Marshall Islands.

Once they reached the island, Louie and Russell were immediately captured by Japanese forces and put in a POW camp where they were imprisoned for over two years in several infamous camps, including Ofuna, Omori and Naoetsu. Thought dead by his family, Louis faced torture worse than death.

One particular brutal guard, nicknamed “The Bird,” planned to make an example of the famous Olympian. Louis would look away from The Bird’s eyes and get punched for looking away; Louis would stare into The Bird’s eyes and get punched for staring at his eyes. The Bird would then whip Louis with a 2-pound steel buckle across the face and head. The Bird would torture, starve and force Louis to perform demeaning acts every day. It seems unthinkable, but during the two years of abuse and torture, Louis never broke down. That is a resilient spirit.

Finally, almost 28 months after his plane crashed, Louis was brought home to California. Louis tried to balance the horrors of his imprisonment with his new found celebrity status in America. His life began to spin out of control. This is not where his story ends.

Louis attributes getting his life back on track to a young evangelist named Billy Graham

who inside a revival tent changed Louis’s life forever. After his reconfirmation to his God, Louis became a missionary to the same country that had held him captive. In Japan, he preached the good word of forgiveness to the guards that tortured him during the war.

Laura Hillenbrand tells the tale of the great American hero Louis Zamperini in the appropriately titled book “Unbroken.” Born in Olean, New York in 1917, Louis moved to Torrance, California with his Italian-American family in the 1920’s. Like most rural American children of the era, he grew up poor in the Depression.

Louis’s teenage years were far different from the life he leads today, but, they were a precursor to the spunk he still exhibits some 80 years later. In his younger years, he was in and out of trouble with the law, having established a reputation on the streets of Torrance as a fighter and a thief. It was here that his older brother, Pete, discovered Louis’s talent for running.

In an effort to restore his street reputation, Louis joined the high school track team. Pete helped develop Louis’s natural athletic speed by training him, first for the mile run. By his senior year, Louis set the world’s high school record in the mile run. Soon after, he qualified to run in the 1936 Berlin Olympics where he was the top American finisher in the 5,000-meter run.

At the Berlin games, Louis’s speed caught Adolf Hitler’s attention, and Hitler sought him out for a congratulatory handshake. The dictatorship that Louis witnessed in Berlin would soon affect him personally.

After returning from the ‘36 Olympics, Louis enrolled at the University of Southern California where he earned a track scholarship. It was five years later that Louis enlisted in the U.S. Army. After Pearl Harbor, Louis was sent to Houston to train in the U.S. Air Corps bombardier school. From there, he served as a bombardier in the South Pacific during World War II.

Louis is now 94 years young. Louis has done more in his life than many can claim: he ran in the 1936 Berlin Olympics; fought in the Second World War; survived a plane crash into the ocean; and endured two years of torture at Japanese POW camps. Having lived for nearly a century, Louis still travels the country telling his story and inspiring generations to come. He still has the fight left in him—don’t let his age fool you.

Today, Louis still travels the world and tells his story of endurance and survival. His patriotic legacy of military service and plain old giving back is one of the best examples of our greatest generation in American history. Louis

is that special warrior who never forsook his duty and never forsook his honor. He was unbroken.

And that’s just the way it is.

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IN REMEMBRANCE OF JUDGE  
PETER SIKORA

**HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 25, 2012*

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court Judge Peter M. Sikora.

Born on December 11, 1951, Judge Sikora was a lifelong Clevelander. He attended St. Ignatius High School where he ran track, cross country and played on the hockey team. Tragically, at the age of 17, Judge Sikora suffered a life altering trampoline accident that left him in a wheelchair. However, he was able to overcome his injury and have a successful career as a judge.

After earning an associate’s degree from Cuyahoga Community College and graduating as valedictorian from Baldwin-Wallace College, Judge Sikora earned his law degree from Case Western Reserve University. He went on to serve as deputy legal counsel for Governor Celeste in the mid-1980s before becoming deputy director and general counsel to the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

In 1989, former Governor Celeste appointed Judge Sikora to the Cuyahoga Juvenile Court where he continued to be re-elected for consecutive terms until his passing. He was the most veteran judge at the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court. In addition to his service, Judge Sikora was a dedicated and active member of the Greater Cleveland community. He was a board member for the Cleveland Ballet, International Services Center, Health Hill Hospital for Children and MetroHealth Rehabilitation Institute of Ohio.

I offer my condolences to his sister, Linda Baxendale; nieces and nephews, Nathan (Sara), Jared (Ashley), Aaron (Suzanne), Leah, Molly, Claire, Ava, Hatcher, Briley, Mary Grace and Jack; his caregiver, Jean Foutz and his court staff.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, please join me in honoring Judge Peter Sikora, who dedicated his life to serving the Greater Cleveland community.