

Katie also served her community as Chairwoman of the Orlando Utilities Commission and in her capacity on other community boards, such as the City of Orlando's Nominating Board, the Orange County Membership Advisory Board, and the Heart of Florida United Way. Katie's love for her community is reflected in her two children, Michael and Stephanie. Stephanie is a community organizer in Central Florida and demonstrates the same commitment to equality and justice that her mother has shown.

Katie's work has earned her recognition in Central Florida. In 1996, she was presented with the Distinguished Leadership Award by the National Association of Community Leadership. In 2000 she was recognized as one of the "Top 10 Central Florida Women Who Mean Business." In 2003, our local public radio station, WMFE, called her the "Can-Do Woman of the Year." Last month, our local newspaper named Katie the "Central Floridian of the Year" for her lifetime commitment to serving our community.

I want to recognize Katie for creating a legacy of care and compassion for the voiceless—and as an inspiration to those of us who dream of serving our community.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I enter these remarks into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of history for my friend, and Central Florida's hero, Katie Porta.

HONORING KIDS ALIVE

HON. LUKE MESSER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 5, 2014

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kids Alive, an organization that is working around the world to improve the lives of children.

America is the most generous nation in human history. When tragedy strikes and innocent people are suffering, Americans respond. Kids Alive is an organization that exemplifies that great American tradition by supporting girls and boys who are orphaned or struggling just to survive extreme poverty. For nearly 100 years, Kids Alive has helped thousands of children with their housing and medical needs, along with providing food, clothing and education assistance. Children from all over the world have seen their lives improve thanks to this faith-based organization.

I am proud that this organization, based in Indiana, has received so much support from the 6th Congressional District. Churches and individuals from across the district have stepped up to help children in the most desperate situations. By donating their time and resources, these Hoosiers have helped give countless kids a better future.

I ask the entire 6th Congressional district to join me in recognizing the important work of Kids Alive and all those who contributed to their success.

HONORING ZACHARIAH FRANKLYNN PIXLER

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 5, 2014

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Zachariah Franklynn Pixler. Zachariah is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 351, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Zachariah has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Zachariah has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community. Most notably, Zachariah has contributed to his community through his Eagle Scout project.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Zachariah Franklynn Pixler for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

HONORING AMBASSADOR VICTOR ASHE

HON. JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 5, 2014

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, Ambassador Victor Ashe retired in 2009 as the longest-serving U.S. Ambassador to Poland.

Prior to his distinguished service abroad, Ambassador Ashe served 16 years as Knoxville's longest-serving Mayor.

Ambassador Ashe has held many other positions in service to Tennessee and our Nation, and he has had one of the most distinguished careers of anyone from my State.

Even following his retirement, Ambassador Ashe is being cited for his expertise and continued devotion to our Nation. I call the following article from the website BBG Watch, in which Ambassador Ashe is quoted many times and is reprinted in part below, to the attention of my colleagues and other readers of the RECORD. I am glad to see my good friend is still working to protect the taxpayers of our Nation:

BBG Watch has learned that officials of the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) at a federal agency, Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), are alleged to have violated IRS tax rules by employing thousands of private contractors as full-time, long-term employees but failing to withhold taxes from their salaries as they were required to do, according to IRS and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). . . .

BBG Watch has also learned of allegations that some IBB officials suspected of these irregularities may be trying to cover up their alleged violations by refusing or delaying release of information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests from private individuals, including news reporters and NGO representatives. . . .

Allegations have been made that some of IBB officials responsible for employing thou-

sands of poorly-paid full-time contractors who have been denied by these officials basic employment protections and benefits, such as vacations and health insurance, may have also been involved in an attempt to silence and remove from the BBG board a former member, Victor Ashe, and to undermine reputation of some of the still serving BBG members who have questioned their management practices.

Alleged retaliation against Ashe is strongly suspected because he was most active among BBG members in trying to expose and prevent waste of taxpayers' money at the agency, but at least two other BBG members who are still serving may have also been a target of a smear campaign. BBG Watch has learned that FOIA requests for documents that may show alleged efforts by IBB officials to silence BBG members and to undermine their reputation are the ones which are not being answered by IBB officials who have not yet produced any documents several months after these FOIA requests were submitted. BBG Watch also learned that there is still a pending FOIA request for additional information about an incident in which a senior Voice of America executive allegedly tried to get officials at the United Nations to revoke a press accreditation of an independent American journalist. BBG's mission is to support media freedom. Some of these officials are still employed by BBG.

One of BBG Watch volunteer-reporters contacted Victor Ashe by phone at his home at Knoxville, TN to get his perspective on the developing scandal over violations of IRS tax rules by agency officials where he was a board member until late last year. Ashe is a former U.S. Ambassador to Poland and former popular long-term mayor of Knoxville. He had served many U.S. administrations of both parties in various federal positions. This is how BBG Watch reporter summarized for BBG Watch the phone conversation with Ashe:

"After years of neglect from prior management, Broadcasting Board of Governors is now moving to remedy the mistreatment from a pay standpoint for 35% of BBG's employees who are on contract as opposed to being fulltime federal employees," former BBG member Victor Ashe said.

"Of course this is due to the heavy pressure from the Internal Revenue Service and the Office of Inspector General," Ashe added.

"One reason BBG has ranked so poorly in Office of Personnel Management (OPM) morale surveys is the way contract employees are treated, as well as the fallout from the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) Radio and TV Marti lawsuit from former Cuban American employees in Miami who were illegally dismissed, according to findings by an impartial Federal Arbitrator and legal panels. This lawsuit, which management has lost at every step along the way, continues with costs exceeding \$3.5 million. While it may last two more years, cost may exceed \$5.3 million by the time it is over. No one seems bothered by this use of tax dollars," Ashe added.

"Morale at the three entities, which are Radio Free Asia (RFA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), remains much higher," he added.

"International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) has a terrible history of mistreating contract employees," Ashe said.

"Congress needs to act swiftly to correct these problems and monitor carefully how BBG is handling the IRS audit and OIG findings. BBG owes the public an explanation on why this has occurred and how they plan on finding \$12 to \$18 million," he added.

"This is all about righting a wrong. IBB past management thought they could get

away with this violation of federal practices and law. Now this seems to be at an end.”

“Now the BBG board should review the Radio and TV Marti lawsuit by Cuban Americans laid off wrongly over 4 years ago and attempt to settle it. Otherwise, BBG may face \$5 million in legal expenses,” Ashe added.

“I commend Jeff Shell, the new chair, for his efforts to correct the problems he inherited,” Victor Ashe stated.

Jeff Shell and the renewed BBG board have already announced several key personnel and management changes at the IBB and further management reforms are expected. Former IBB director retired at the end of November 2013. But some remaining IBB officials are alleged to be engaged in an attempt to cover up their previous mistakes by unnecessarily prolonging the FOIA process, sources told BBG Watch.

Ashe and some of his colleagues on the BBG board have been vindicated in a number of cases where their initial concerns were first strongly resisted by agency officials and later turned out to be correct and their proposed solutions embraced by other BBG members.

Among three BBG members who seem to have most annoyed IBB senior staff with demands for accountability, Ashe is credited along with Susan McCue and Michael Meehan with saving Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) from a major management and journalistic crisis last year. Ashe received the Glasnost Award for these efforts from a Russian human rights organization. He is also believed to have helped new RFE/RL CEO Kevin Klose rehire Radio Liberty journalists who had been fired by the previous management—an incident which produced a major public relations and public diplomacy crisis for the United States in Russia.

In a phone conversation about his previous difficult dealings with IBB officials, Ashe recalled discovering that flu shots were being denied to contract employees at the agency because of their status. IBB officials declined to correct the problem until he went public with the issue and shamed them into recognizing it was a health risk for the entire workforce, since contract employees and federal employees work daily side by side. “Today I am glad to say all can receive flu shots,” Ashe was quoted as saying.

Alleged attempts to silence inconvenient BBG members and alleged attempts by IBB senior executives to remove Ashe from the BBG board with unfounded accusations to the OIG were described in recent editorials published by the American Federation of Government Employees, AFGE Local 1812, a union representing BBG’s federal workforce. One OIG team sided with IBB officials against Ashe and incredibly accused him of being too aggressive in pursuing his oversight responsibilities, although it did not mention him by name. That particular OIG team repeated assurances received from IBB executives and, also incredibly, did not discover any substantial waste or irregularities in the agency, which has a budget of over \$700 million. It took another, different OIG team to find widespread irregularities in the work of IBB officials, including nonpayment of IRS required taxes.

Ashe is widely admired by rank and file agency employees and contractors, as are Governors McCue and Meehan. Chairman Shell has also developed a good reputation among BBG employees for his energy, willingness to listen to critics and some of the initial reforms he has proposed.

Ashe’s departure from the board was particularly mourned by BBG employees. Their union has arranged with the Knoxville, TN city administration to have a tree planted in

one of its parks in honor of former BBG Governor and former U.S. Ambassador.

In a recent article in Ambassador Perspectives, a forum of commentary on current world issues by non-career U.S. Ambassadors who have served presidents of both parties, Ashe has proposed several solutions to management problems at the BBG, including appointing a single agency head, confirmable by the Senate, dissolving the current part-time nine-member board, or making it much smaller. The CEO proposal, but without Senate confirmation, is also being pursued by Chairman Shell and the current BBG board.

Ashe has also called for bringing Congress more closely into the process of reforming U.S. international media outreach to those countries where independent press is either severely restricted or completely repressed. Ashe told a reporter that “hopefully, Congress will start holding annual oversight hearings on U.S. international media outreach, which have not been held for six years.”

The key questions, however, are whether anyone among IBB’s current government executives who are still in their positions will answer for alleged violations of tax and other federal rules? Who will pay millions of dollars, which have not been appropriated by Congress, to correct alleged mistakes? Can IBB officials get away with not releasing FOIA documents that may expose their alleged attempts to cover up corruption and abuse of power.

BBG Watch has learned that at the urging of a least one NGO, a member of Congress known for his support of U.S. international broadcasting mission abroad plans to make inquiries to the BBG to find out why IBB officials are dragging their feet on answering FOIA requests for information that may expose their alleged misdeeds.

It’s not the first time, and not the last, that we ask: who’s in charge of this Agency?

As the new Broadcasting Board of Governors members get down to business, we recognize their role of being in charge of ensuring that the broadcasting arm of the United States government carries out its mission for the 21st century. However, we get the feeling that some in top and mid-level management take the position that the bureaucracy is still in charge, will remain in charge, and will make sure the BBG understands who is really in charge.

Why should there be any concern? Flash back to the arrival at the Agency several years ago of a former BBG Governor, the Honorable U.S. Ambassador Victor Ashe. A politician, in addition to a diplomat, with extensive managerial experience, he engaged in behavior any official on the BBG should feel comfortable engaging in: he met with the staff, listened to their concerns, opened a communication channel by providing his personal e-mail and started asking questions of management.

The backlash was swift and fierce. Ambassador Ashe was warned in private, then warned again more forcefully in public, against assuming his full role as Governor. Apparently he did not get the message. The General Counsel’s office—whose main purpose sometimes seems to be not to assist management in respecting the law, but rather in how to circumvent it—drafted new rules that essentially tried to muzzle BBG members, trying to prevent them from freely discussing Agency business.

But that did not silence Ambassador Ashe. He had the courage to publicly deplore the diplomatic mess created by the firing of most of the staff at the Russian Service of Radio Liberty. Payback time came in many forms including a rather silly and spiteful incident, when Governor Ashe was refused entry to an event to which he was invited.

Other blockades were erected by the resident bureaucracy to thwart any attempts by Governor Ashe to find out what was going on in the Agency including a scandalous contracting-out process. Even the OIG, in its January 2013 report, characterized Governor Ashe’s actions as somewhat of a transgression when it wrote: “He visits widely throughout the agency, offering to bypass IBB management to assure Board attention to employee concerns.”

And yet, Ambassador Ashe did not budge. He continued his fight. So, he was disposed of thanks to a blistering and factually-challenged OIG report that the Union described, and still does, as a ‘hatchet job’. He could have stayed in his position as a Republican Governor on the BBG. There was no need to push out the only BBG member who had a perfect attendance record at all meetings and seemed to genuinely care, and was competent as well. The Agency would not stand for that and the White House somehow found time to name someone to replace him.

AFGE Local 1812 will always be grateful to former Governor Ashe for his intrepid efforts to try to find out what was wrong in the Agency and to fix it. We are also grateful that he did not look at the Union as a pariah. For its part, the Union has arranged with the Knoxville, TN, city administration to have a tree planted in one of its parks in honor of Governor Ashe where he served five terms as mayor. We are considering another project in his honor as well.

REMEMBERING GENERAL BLAZ

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 5, 2014

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and remember former U.S. Representative and Brigadier General Vicente T. “Ben” Blaz, who passed away on January 8, 2014 in Fairfax, Virginia at the age of 85.

Gen. Blaz was born on February 14, 1928, in Hagatna, the capital of Guam. At 13, he was forced into a Japanese detention camp following the Japanese seizure of the island immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. While a detainee, Gen. Blaz witnessed the torture and murder of his fellow Chamorros—natives of Guam—until American Marines liberated the island in 1944.

Following the war, Blaz learned English and received a scholarship to study at the University of Notre Dame. Soon after graduation, he joined the Marine Corps, where he served in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, earning the Bronze Star. He then served in the Joint Staff for a number of years, including under General Lemeul Shephard, who liberated his home from the Japanese many years earlier.

Blaz was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in 1977. He was the first non-white soldier to attain this rank within the Marine Corps.

Gen. Blaz served three more years before retiring from the military and returning home to Guam. There he worked as a teacher and farmer until his election to the U.S. Congress in 1982. For eight years, he served as Guam’s non-voting representative in the House, and held committee assignments on the Foreign Affairs Committee and Armed Forces Committee. During his time in Congress, he focused on veterans’ education issues, as well as the reorganization of Guam’s judicial system.