

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IN RECOGNITION OF TEACHER AND MUSICIAN WILLIAM DEWITT

HON. GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN

OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 31, 2015

Mr. SABLAN. Mr. Speaker, allow me to add to the record of the U.S. House of Representatives the story Mr. William DeWitt, a teacher, who has brought the art of music in the Northern Mariana Islands to an unprecedented level of excellence and who has given to thousands of our young people the joy of finding within themselves their own musical talents.

Mr. William DeWitt first came to the Northern Mariana Islands in 1993, beginning his career in middle and junior high school, teaching a variety of subjects, including band, piano, and choir. He then accepted an offer to teach at Marianas High School and was successful there at reviving its band program. Enthusiasm for instrumental music education began to crescendo, and in 2002 Mr. DeWitt was invited to join the faculty of the newly inaugurated Saipan Southern High School, which was designed to be a magnet school for students with an interest in the arts and technology. He has now spent thirteen years at Saipan Southern, helping countless students fulfill their dream to make music and share it with the world. In doing so, Mr. DeWitt and the students he has guided have created a legacy, the Saipan Southern High School Manta Ray Band, that is certainly one of the greatest sources of pride for the Northern Marianas Public School System and, indeed, for our entire community.

When Mr. DeWitt came to Saipan 22 years ago, he could not have known what he would accomplish. Our island community has always teemed with multi-generational musical talent and held a deep love for singing. But band music and its array of instruments—the trumpet, flute, trombone, and clarinet—were less well known. Mr. DeWitt changed that.

Mr. DeWitt also oversaw the incorporation of a growing diversity of students into our schools using music as a unifying influence and adding the international flavor of this new student body to its musical sensibility. Up to 250 students now participate in some aspect of the Manta Ray Band program at Saipan Southern. They come from many ethnicities and cultures—Chamorro, Carolinian, Palauan, Marshallese, Filipino, Korean, Hawaiian, Japanese, Chinese, Indian—and William DeWitt has helped them learn to join together as one, making music.

Perhaps, this very diversity is key to the success and world-wide recognition the Manta Ray Band has achieved under the baton of Mr. DeWitt. Five times in the last seven years the Manta Ray Band has earned the Tumon Bay Music Festival Sweepstakes Award, the most wins by any organization in the festival's history. The Manta Rays have been invited to and performed at two Olympic Games: Beijing

in 2008 and London in 2012. The Band has showcased its talents at the Sydney Opera House, Carnegie Hall, Westminster Abbey, and Disneyland. And just last month, at the Los Angeles Musical Festival the Manta Ray Band earned the Gold Award as the highest scoring ensemble in festival competition.

This Gold Award is something of a fairy-tale ending to Mr. DeWitt's career. His band executed its performance with a new precision and intensity. His students displayed an infectious enthusiasm and rhythmic jaunt that gave their concert an element of variety and versatility no other ensemble could match. But backstage after the event amidst the triumph, while cameras clicked, tears flowed and hugs abounded, as the Manta Rays dealt with the recognition that this pinnacle also marked the end of an era—for Mr. William DeWitt had taken his final bow with the band.

William DeWitt and his family will now be able to spend time with his parents in California, where he will also pursue a post-graduate degree. We wish him well. And we will always be grateful to him for the way that he drew from a very small population of students their maximum talent, so inculcating them in the fundamental elements of musicianship that they were able to soar on international stages.

As significant as what he gave to each individual student, we will remember what Mr. William DeWitt gave to the larger communities of which we are part: the pride and honor his musicians brought to Saipan Southern High School, to the Public School System, and to the Northern Mariana Islands as a whole. This musical venture he has led became a partnership for all of us. Individuals and businesses gladly supported the Manta Ray Band with contributions totaling more than a million dollars over the course of the past decade. And, as a community, we should honor William DeWitt's legacy by continuing to give our young musicians the opportunity to develop, master, and showcase their talents.

Lastly, we acknowledge, as does Mr. DeWitt, his wife Lois and his children Emily, Abigail, and James, who throughout have been his source of inspiration and support. We thank them for allowing their husband and father to commit so much of his time and energy to the students of Saipan Southern and the Northern Mariana Islands.

And we thank you, Mr. William DeWitt. May the richness of island life always flow in your blood, just as your accomplishments will always be engraved into our island history.

THE MAN WHO WAS LARGER THAN LIFE

HON. J. FRENCH HILL

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 31, 2015

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of his life, Richard "Dick" Bass was a force to be reckoned with. He always strove to be the

first and best at whatever he did—whether as a student, oilman, rancher, ski resort developer, or mountaineer.

As a young man of sixteen, he enrolled in Yale University, graduating with a B.S. in Geology at the age of twenty. The gregarious spirit and boundless curiosity that prompted him to climb one of Europe's highest peaks, the Matterhorn, at nineteen, would continue to be both servant and driver throughout his life.

Shortly after moving back to Texas to join the family oil business, Dick began taking regular trips to Colorado to ski. His love for skiing and his fellow outdoor enthusiasts motivated him to seek out involvement in the industry. Shortly after starting these trips, he and his brother purchased stock in a small underdeveloped area in Eagle County, Colorado, that became the globally famous Town of Vail. The success and increased public interest in Vail led to his co-ownership and development of the Snowbird ski resort in Utah. He and his Snowbird partner, Ted Johnson, traveled across Europe searching for inspiration and innovation to bring their vision to life.

His pioneering spirit was not limited to investments and skiing and hearken back to his younger self's interest in mountain climbing. He was determined to become the first man to conquer the Seven Summits, the highest mountains in each of the continents, and achieved this monumental undertaking on April 30, 1985. Throughout his life, his mindset was always that of ceaseless perseverance, as exemplified by his three attempts and final summit of Mt. Everest.

Dick Bass may have passed on to his newest adventure at the age of eighty-five, but his entire life serves as a testament to the power of determination and enterprise. Dick was larger than life, actively living every second to the fullest and taking on any challenge thrown at him. He left a truly indelible mark on the world, his wife, Alice, his children Dan Bass, Bonnie Smith, Barbara Moroney, Jim Bass, and his thirteen grandchildren.

I was proud to count Dick Bass as a family friend and a source of inspiration to me in my love of the mountains and my business career. As John Muir said, "Climb the mountains and get their good tidings"; Dick, your legacy lives on.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE REVEREND WILLIE L. HILL

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 31, 2015

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an outstanding Man of God who has been a longstanding source of inspiration, spiritual guidance, and moral leadership to the people of Southwest Georgia, the Reverend Willie L. Hill. Reverend Hill is retiring after 28 years of pastoring the Greater Beallwood Baptist Church in Columbus, Georgia. The congregation will be honoring Rev.

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

Hill for his leadership at a retirement dinner on Saturday, August 15, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at the Columbus Country Club and at a retirement program on Sunday, August 16, 2015 during the 11:00 a.m. service at the church.

A native of Columbus, Georgia, Willie L. Hill was born to the late Hollis and Dora Hill. He was educated in the public school system of Muscogee County. Reverend Hill then served our nation honorably in the United States Army during the Vietnam War. After completing his service, he attended Chattahoochee Valley Community College in Phenix City, Alabama, where he earned an associate's degree, and later attended Troy University to complete a bachelor's degree in Criminology. It was then that Rev. Hill heard God's call to preach and enrolled in the American Baptist College to study theology.

Rev. Hill pastored the Greater Beallwood Baptist Church for 28 years, faithfully carrying out his vision for the church and leading its members in the fulfillment of a God-first life. In the years after Rev. Hill became pastor, Greater Beallwood expanded greatly, growing from a century-old church that was facing financial hardship to a spiritual praising center serving almost 350 people weekly. Not only did Rev. Hill's leadership grow the congregation in number and in spirit, but it also was instrumental in the building of a new sanctuary that would accommodate the numerous church services and meetings.

A strong advocate of access to Christian education, Rev. Hill founded Children's Church, a separate training and worship service for children ages 5 through 12 to grow in their faith. Children's Church serves as a valuable resource for members of the Greater Beallwood Baptist Church and has helped children learn about the word of God in a way that they can relate to and understand.

Throughout his pastoral career, always seeking to improve the craft of Christian ministry and discipleship, Rev. Hill has served as President of the Inter-Denominational Ministerial Alliance for eight years and Vice President for four years. He served as President of the Fourth District Congress of Christian Education for two years, and he also co-founded the Columbus Ministerial Association. An avid golfer and fierce competitor, Rev. Hill served on the Golf Authority of the Columbus Consolidated Government for ten years.

Jeremiah 3:15 says, "Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding." Reverend Willie Hill is one such shepherd and a man of integrity who exudes the genuine principles and values of Christian discipleship. A charismatic evangelical leader and pioneer, his spiritual zeal is both infectious and highly contagious.

Rev. Hill is surrounded by the love and support of his congregation, but also his family—his wife of 52 years, Helen; their two sons, Daren and Brandon; and three beloved grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me, my wife Vivian, and the more than 730,000 residents of Georgia's Second Congressional District in thanking the Reverend Willie L. Hill for his service to our nation, the Columbus community, the Greater Beallwood Baptist Church, and the Kingdom of God.

HONORING DR. R. SCOTT RALLS,
RETIRING PRESIDENT OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY
COLLEGE SYSTEM

HON. DAVID E. PRICE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 31, 2015

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Scott Ralls, the seventh president of the North Carolina Community College System, who stepped down as president of the system this summer after seven years of service.

North Carolina's community college system is one of the state's greatest educational assets. It is one of the nation's largest community college systems, and its reach is extensive, with most North Carolinians residing within 30 miles of one of its 58 colleges. The system serves more than 850,000 individuals annually, with 321,000 students in degree, certificate and curriculum programs and almost 500,000 students taking continuing education classes. Some 40 percent of the state's wage earners today have received some education or training at a North Carolina community college in the past 10 years.

Dr. Ralls was an exemplary president, carrying on the fine tradition of leadership of his predecessor, and our former House colleague, Martin Lancaster. Taking the helm in 2008, President Ralls' tenure began just as the recession hit and the state's unemployment rate began to soar. During the first three years of his presidency, displaced workers flocked to the state's community colleges; the system's enrollment grew 28 percent from 2007 to 2010. At the same time, the system weathered a budget crunch, all the while embarking on a strategy to revamp curriculum, improve completion rates, and forge new transfer agreements with the state's university system.

Even with these challenges, Dr. Ralls helped the System obtain international recognition for its efforts to foster economic and workforce development. Ralls's efforts included expanding health care programs, re-energizing technical education, strengthening the connection between economic and workforce development, and furthering strong partnerships between public schools, community colleges and the University of North Carolina System to promote seamless education pathways.

President Ralls also focused efforts on improving student success. He was an early champion for early college high schools, and today, North Carolina hosts one-third of all early colleges in the U.S.—the vast majority located on the campuses of community colleges. In addition, in 2009, under Dr. Ralls's leadership, the North Carolina Community College System initiated a comprehensive set of strategic initiatives focused on student success and program completion entitled SuccessNC, consolidating curriculums into 32 critical growth areas for North Carolina's economy and providing students with opportunities to earn industry-recognized, stackable credentials, resulting in a more competitive workforce. The Brookings Institution and the Rockefeller Foundation recognized this model in describing one of the most "forward-thinking economy-shifting efforts underway in America's state and metropolitan areas."

During his tenure, President Ralls was elected by national peers to be the President of the National Association of Industry-Specific Training Directors. He also led a state task force responsible for creating policies and procedures for the New and Expanding Industry Training Program, which resulted in a 16% reduction in expenditures and 11% increase in total training projects. Further, he chaired a task force on workplace safety training and generated new policies for administering the NC Worker Training Tax Credit Program.

Dr. Ralls serves on several national and state boards and commissions and is the Chair of the National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges. He has earned a number of awards and honors, including a Certificate of Appreciation from the U.S. Department of Commerce (1995), and a Certificate of Appreciation from the NC Rural Prosperity Task Force (2000). He was also awarded the 2006 Freedom Fund Award from the Craven County NAACP, and was dubbed a 2007–2008 Impact Business Leader by the Charlotte Business Leader Magazine.

Prior to serving as the North Carolina Community College System President, Dr. Ralls was president of Craven Community College in New Bern and Havelock. This makes him only the second former North Carolina community college president to hold the System presidency, and he is leaving to once again assume the presidency of a fine institution, the Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC). While at Craven, he led efforts to support college enrollment growth, while facing significant impacts of military deployment. At Craven, Ralls led in establishing workforce development programs in targeted industry sectors; helped create Craven Early College; initiated University Connections to foster on-site and on-line degree completion opportunities, and fostered an Undergraduate Engineering Education partnership with N.C. State College of Engineering.

Dr. Ralls, a leader of national distinction, is also an approachable, collaborative person who has been a delight for me and others to work with personally. He guided North Carolina's community colleges through the economic downturn and state budget cuts and oversaw a period of remarkable growth. Thanks to his tireless efforts, thousands of North Carolinians have had the opportunity to obtain the education and training they need to realize their full potential. I thank Dr. Ralls for his years of service to the state of North Carolina and wish him the very best as he assumes the helm at NVCC.

RECOGNIZING RECIPIENTS OF THE
2015 BEST OF BRADDOCK AWARDS

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 31, 2015

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the recipients of the 2015 Best of Braddock Awards, presented by the Braddock District Council of Community Associations. These awards are given annually to deserving individuals, organizations, and companies in the Braddock Magisterial District of Fairfax County, Virginia, who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to our community.