

loved by many. I know that your family at Sugar Land Baptist Church is lifting you up in prayers and surrounding you with love. Again, the folks from the Twenty Second Congressional District are very sorry for your loss. We lost Phil too soon, and he will be missed.

**PRESS CONFERENCE: BERTIE'S RESPECT FOR NATIONAL CEMETERIES ACT**

**HON. LOU BARLETTA**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 3, 2015*

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, our national military cemeteries are hallowed ground.

And I ask my colleagues to agree . . . and support my bill, H.R. 2490, "Bertie's Respect for National Cemeteries Act."

On October 15, 1969, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a man named George Emery Siple shot and killed Bertha Smith, known to everyone as "Bertie."

Siple was convicted of the murder . . . and sentenced to life in prison without parole.

Thirty years later, he died in prison.

Because he was a military veteran, he was buried in Indiantown Gap National Cemetery in 1999.

He was buried there despite a federal law passed in 1997.

That law said that veterans convicted of federal or state capital crimes . . . are not permitted to be buried in Veterans Affairs National Cemeteries or Arlington National Cemetery.

For Bertie Smith's family, this is a heart-wrenching situation that has gone on for three decades.

Jackie Katz—Bertie's daughter—has called it "hell" and a "horror" to live with the fact that George Siple was memorialized and buried with full military honors.

When I first began to look into this issue, it was clear to me that it was as frustrating as it was heartbreaking.

Back in 1997—led by our Pennsylvania Senators—Congress passed a law that said that veterans found guilty of capital crimes could not be buried in our national veterans cemeteries.

At that time, you may remember, the country was still reeling from the Oklahoma City bombing.

And veterans everywhere were justifiably appalled that Timothy McVeigh, a military veteran, could be buried with full military honors.

Now, McVeigh did not receive that burial.

But a major problem we discovered was that the law was not actively enforced for others until 2006.

Since then, the VA has relied on an "honor system," which requires family members to willingly report their relative's criminal record.

In 2013, Congress once again sought to protect our VA National Cemeteries by passing a law to explicitly allow the VA to remove veterans from cemeteries, if they had been convicted of a federal or state capital crime. However, this law does not extend to veterans buried between 1997 and 2013, a time period that includes George Emery Siple.

That's why I've introduced "Bertie's Respect for National Cemeteries Act."

What this law will do is:

Require Veterans Affairs to take every reasonable action to ensure that a veteran is eligible to be buried, including searching public criminal records.

It will clarify Congress's original intent by providing Veterans Affairs the explicit authority . . . to remove veterans convicted of capital crimes that were wrongly buried after 1997.

And it will specifically provide for the removal of George Emery Siple from Indiantown Gap National Cemetery.

This bill really only reaffirms what Congress intended in the first place.

And it enjoys the support of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

There are precedents for the removal of convicted murderers from veterans cemeteries—from Arlington National Cemetery, and VA cemeteries in Michigan, and Oregon . . . to name just a few.

Additionally, nothing in the bill would withdraw previous military honors, such as Purple Hearts or medals for valor, otherwise earned by the deceased veterans.

The discussion of military veterans who have been convicted of murder often raises the issue of mental health treatment and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

There is no question that PTSD is a real condition affecting many service men and women, and I have always stood for funding the evaluation and treatment of those who may be afflicted.

That said, those who have been convicted of capital murder by our judicial system have been declared guilty of the worst offense possible, and any mitigating factors would have been considered at trial and sentencing. And I don't think it's too much to say that murderers should not be buried next to true American heroes.

And the memories of victims like Bertie Smith should not be disregarded. I ask my colleagues for their support in saying that real, true honor really means something in our National Military Cemeteries.

**HONORING GREATER GROVE STREET MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH**

**HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 3, 2015*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a pillar of the community, Greater Grove Street Missionary Baptist Church. Greater Grove Street M. B. Church has served as a catalyst for the African American growth in Warren County and the State of Mississippi.

Greater Grove Street Missionary Baptist Church was organized in 1908 in the former home of the late Cosby family on the lower West end of Grove Street. The church was known commonly as "Cato's Church," a name noting the leadership and zeal of its principal deacon at the time. Deacon F. Jackson and family donated the Cornerstone.

Rev. Willie Wood was elected as the first pastor of the church and he served until death. The next pastor, Rev. George S. Lewis, served aptly, with deacons: William Fair, E. Sparkmen and W. Wilson serving faithfully under him.

In 1948, Rev. W.C. Porter was elected pastor; and under his leadership, the following officers served: Sing Robin, Lieutenant Bradley, Charlie Hunt, Jessie Ware, Theodore Shaw, Rufus Britten, James Williams, Rufus Price and Tom Neal.

In 1962, the church came to a major crisis. The City of Vicksburg began widening Grove Street. Grove Street M.B. Church laid in the path of the city's improvements. As a result, the church was torn down. The concrete baptismal pool remains on the old lot, and is the solitary reminder that the church ever existed there. In our hour of need, the Pastor, Rev. E. E. Tutt, and the members of Ebenezer M.B. Church proved to be our friends indeed, as they shared their church building with Grove Street M. B. Church over three years as they struggled to rebuild the church.

West of the old site, a new property on Pierce Street, was selected. On April 27, 1965, at a cost of \$13,000.00, the congregation moved into its newly built tabernacle. First, the old pews from the old church were shed. At a cost of \$600.00, more comfortable pews were purchased from Fisher Funeral Home. In 1972, at a cost of \$2,400.00, the members added 534 square feet of floor space to the rear of the church, which consists of the Fellowship Hall and the kitchen. On June 28, 1975, a chapter of their struggle and movement ended with the death of Rev. W.C. Porter, their pastor through their trials.

Rev. Albert Price succeeded Rev. Porter. Under his leadership, the march resumed for the church. They installed a public address system and added brick veneer to the building at a cost of \$10,000.00. This brief chapter ended in the death of Rev. Price after only serving eleven months as pastor.

In 1977, God blessed the congregation with the energetic leadership of Rev. John L. Brown. Under his leadership, the members were able to free themselves from the mortgage and all indebtedness. In 1979, a new central air unit was installed. However, there was still work to be done. For example, they purchased a Baldwin organ in 1979 to enhance the song service and installed a central cooling system for \$4,056.81; and in 1985, landscaping and drainage work was done which cost \$5,350.00.

In this description of the establishment, struggle, and movement of Grove Street M.B. Church, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit motivated them to have a place set aside for the many souls that were added to the church; and He motivated them to actively seek to grow spiritually and to inspire future generations with the spiritual mission. As Dr. John L. Brown continued to lead and direct the church, it was hoped that Grove Street M.B. Church would continue to grow.

Dr. John L. Brown was a native of Utica, MS. He is a graduate of Alcorn A&M College, in Lorman, MS, where he received his B.S. degree in Elementary Education. He did further study toward his M.S. degree in Elementary Education at Jackson State College, Jackson, Mississippi. He received his Ph.D. degree from McKinley Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS, in 1981. Dr. Brown was a teacher and principal in the Hinds County Public School System, Utica, MS, for twenty years.

As a community leader, he served as an adult leader of the 4-H Club, Mixon Junior High School, Utica, MS, for five years. He served as president of the N.A.A.C.P., Utica,

MS branch, for twelve years. He served on the Board of Directors of the Mississippi Baptist State Convention for ten years, and the Community Services Association and the Hinds County Community Action Agency, Jackson, MS for eight years. Dr. Brown honorably served his community as a community voter registration coordinator, advisor, civil rights activists, social worker, and community organizer.

He was a pastor of three other churches: Orange Hill Baptist Church, Bolton, MS; Rock of Ages Baptist Church, Vicksburg, MS; and Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Lorman, MS. He was in the ministry for over 30 years. His loving and devoted wife, Mrs. Lucille Brown, supported Dr. Brown in all of his efforts. Their union was blessed with six children, four girls and two boys.

Under his leadership, the members altered the way services were conducted. Instead of posting the Order of Service on the wall, printed programs were disseminated to the congregation. The practice of roll call (where each member's name was called and one stated the amount of his tithes/offering) was eliminated and the practice of distributing envelopes was implemented. In 1987, land was purchased and donated to the church, which were forty-seven lots (North side of the church) to be used for additional parking. In 1993, two more additional corner lots were purchased. Also, the wooden steeple on the church was replaced with a fiberglass steeple. In 1996, the church van was purchased due to the increased attendance in Bible class. Ceiling fans were also purchased and installed in the sanctuary and fellowship hall.

In January 9, 1999, Pastor Casey D. Fisher was elected pastor of Greater Grove Street a M.B. Church. At the time he began this ministry, the church had a membership of approximately sixty-five souls. Soon after becoming pastor, Rev. Fisher adopted his motto, "Making this church the best church this side of Heaven," and his theme, "This is the Church where the gospel is preached, love is practiced and people are changed." Under his leadership, the church congregation has grown from the initial sixty-five members to over six hundred. Pastor Fisher began his ministry in September of 1998, which he was ordained under the pastorate of Reverend Willie L. Lewis of Jackson, Mississippi.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Greater Grove Street M. B. Church for its rich heritage and dedication to serving others and giving back to the community.

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#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. ALMA S. ADAMS

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 3, 2015*

Ms. ADAMS. Mr. Speaker, on June 2, 2015 I was absent for recorded votes #268 and #269 due to the passing of my mother.

I would like to reflect how I would have voted if I were here: On Roll Call #268 I would have voted No, On Roll Call #269 I would have voted No.

IN RECOGNITION OF CYNTHIA  
SIMMS

### HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 3, 2015*

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Cynthia Simms who is retiring as the Superintendent of the San Mateo-Foster City School District after a remarkable career in education that spans more than four decades. She has been an educator for 43 years and a superintendent for 27 years, 14 of them in California. Dr. Simms' outstanding leadership, vision and communication skills have benefited thousands of students, parents, teachers and the community as a whole.

Dr. Simms was the Superintendent of the San Mateo-Foster City School District for four years overseeing the largest elementary-middle school district in San Mateo County with 20 schools, 12,000 students and 1,200 employees. She hired 13 of 20 current school principals and three district administrators. Her priority has been to provide the best possible education for each child to prepare her or him for a successful life as a responsible, contributing citizen. She instills a wonderful sense of community by making every staff member feel appreciated through their significant role in accomplishing this mission.

During her tenure, four schools were honored as California Distinguished Schools and eight school programs received J. Russell Kent Awards. Dr. Simms focused the school district on equity for all students by supporting and growing magnet school program choices for parents including STEM, STEAM, spearheading the transition of Horrell Elementary School to LEAD Elementary School, and expanding the Montessori program. She also adopted the Common Core State Standards that are designed to turn students into critical thinkers, effective communicators, collaborators and innovators. Always looking to the child's future, the district formed important partnerships with the San Mateo Union High School District, St. Mary's College and California State University East Bay.

Dr. Simms understands that children cannot thrive academically if they don't feel safe or are unhealthy. This is why she implemented consistent safety protocols across the district that include security fencing, cameras, intrusion alarms and Columbine lock sets. The schools work closely with local police departments on gang resistance training.

All students take music classes and healthy food is served at breakfast and lunch. There even is a growing number of vegetable gardens at the schools. Under Dr. Simms' leadership, the San Mateo-Foster City School District cares for and about the wellbeing of its students on every level.

Dr. Simms is credited with developing extensive communication inside and outside of the schools. There is a weekly letter to all staff, a monthly newsletter to parents, collaboration with city councils and local legislators, and quarterly reports mailed to every resident and business in San Mateo and Foster City. Collaboration, partnership and inclusiveness are core values in Dr. Simms' philosophy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the House of Representatives rise with me to honor Dr. Cynthia Simms, an extraordinary educator who is

deeply committed to our community and to the future of our children. She tirelessly strived for excellence, harmony and the success of her students. Her expertise, energy and enthusiasm will be missed as she enters her well-deserved retirement.

CONGRATULATING XANDER  
MCPHEETERS

### HON. TODD C. YOUNG

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 3, 2015*

Mr. YOUNG of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of Xander McPheeters of Salem, Indiana.

I want to congratulate Xander on receiving the Hobie's Hero Award. Xander received this award as a result of heroic actions he took to save his father. James McPheeters was clearing brush from his farm near Salem, Indiana when he was suddenly struck by a falling tree. James was knocked off his tractor where he lay unconscious with multiple serious injuries. His son Xander, being the only person to see the accident occur, rushed to help his injured father. Xander proceeded to turn off the key to the runaway tractor and run to his nearest neighbor's home who called 911. The emergency response team arrived and saved James McPheeters life as a result of Xander's decisive actions.

The Hobie's Heroes Award is presented to young people, 18 years or younger, who perform heroic actions in the spirit of self-sacrifice, without consideration of personal gain, for the benefit of another in significant need. Being that Xander was five years old when he performed these lifesaving actions, I know that he is the epitome of what the Hobie's Heroes Award represents.

Xander will be the sixth Hobie's Hero Award recipient and he is the youngest recipient to date. Xander is an inspiration and role model for Hoosiers across Indiana. It is an honor to rise today and highlight Xander's fearlessness, and congratulate him on receiving the Hobie's Hero Award.

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#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. DAVID P. ROE

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 3, 2015*

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to vote yesterday because of the death of a close friend. Had I been present, I would have voted:

Roll Call #270—AYE  
Roll Call #271—NO  
Roll Call #272—AYE  
Roll Call #273—AYE

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#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 3, 2015*

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to note that I was unable to vote