

## EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING THE LAO HERITAGE FLAG AS THE OFFICIAL SYMBOL OF THE LAO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY OF NEW YORK AND WAT LAO SAMAKHITHAM

**HON. CHRISTOPHER P. GIBSON**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, November 25, 2016*

Mr. GIBSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Lao Heritage Flag as the Official Symbol of the Lao-American Community of New York and Wat Lao Samakhitham.

The members of the Lao-American Community in New York are true patriots in every sense of the word. Before arriving in America, many Lao-Americans courageously fought and shed blood in their struggle for freedom during the Southeast Asian conflict in the 1960's and 1970's. As American citizens, they continue to embody an unwavering love of liberty and a desire to serve. There are a significant number of Lao-Americans in New York, and they make great contributions to their local communities.

Lao-American citizens are proud to fly the Lao Heritage Flag alongside the flag of the United States of America. This flag is characterized by the three-headed white elephant, and it is significant to Lao-Americans as a symbol of resilience, freedom, and democracy in Laos, as well as the United States of America. Under this flag, the Lao-American community of New York maintains their Lao cultural heritage while simultaneously celebrating American heritage and customs.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge each member of the vibrant Lao-American community in New York and thank them for their valuable contribution to our State. As a former service member, I believe strongly in the great symbolism of a flag and the pride that accompanies its display. It is my hope that the Lao-American community will always look to the Lao Heritage Flag and be reminded of the prosperity and freedom for Lao-American citizens across the United States.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF  
MAJOR MATT SCHARDT

**HON. CHRISTOPHER P. GIBSON**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, November 25, 2016*

Mr. GIBSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the service of Major Matt Schardt of the United States Army for his extraordinary dedication to duty and service to our Nation. Major Schardt distinguished himself through exceptionally meritorious service from May 5th, 2013 to January 3rd, 2017, while serving as an Army Congressional Fellow and Legislative Liaison in the Army House Liaison Division.

From May 5th, 2013 through January 5th, 2015 Major Schardt served as an Army Congressional Fellow. During this time Matt graduated from The George Washington University with a Master's Degree in legislative politics and served as my military legislative assistant (MLA). As my MLA, Matt served as the national security, foreign affairs, homeland security, intelligence, and veteran's affairs policy

advisor for my office. Matt developed, drafted, and managed my legislative initiatives, provided vote recommendations, prepared me for Congressional hearings, and met with senior government officials and constituents. In all of his actions, Matt demonstrated the professionalism Members of Congress and the American public expect of its military officers.

In January, 2015 Major Schardt transitioned from my office to the Army House Liaison Office to serve as an Army legislative liaison. In his role as a legislative liaison in the Army's House Liaison Office, Major Schardt served as the primary liaison between Members of the 114th Congress, their Staffs, Legislative Committees, and the U.S. Army. In this role, Major Schardt planned, coordinated, and accompanied Congressional and Staff Delegations on numerous worldwide fact-finding and investigative missions and worked to increase the trust the U.S. Congress has in the U.S. Army.

Major Schardt is a native of Littleton, Colorado who has served in combat units across the U.S. Army including the 25th Infantry Division and the 4th Infantry Division. A veteran of the conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan, Major Schardt is married to the former Amy Meersman of Littleton, Colorado and the proud father of two children—Kyle and Cora. This spring, Major Schardt and his family depart for their next assignment with the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kansas.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to recognize the selfless service of Major Matt Schardt as he and his family proceed to the next chapter in his remarkable career and continue to serve our great Nation.

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