

communities, Christians and other religious minorities, and to the rule of law in Europe and Eurasia. We must remain vigilant and ensure that the United States, as an original participating State of the OSCE, strongly supports the OSCE's efforts to ensure European Jewish communities are safe and secure, that Christians and other religious minorities are free to fully practice their faith, and that the rule of law prevails.

RECOGNIZING LIFELONG EDUCATOR DR. AUBREY W. BONNETT

HON. KATHLEEN M. RICE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 12, 2016

Miss RICE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Dr. Aubrey W. Bonnett, a resident of New York's Fourth Congressional District and a life-long educator.

Throughout his 43-year career in higher education, Dr. Bonnett has achieved tremendous success as a scholar of immigration, race, sociology and diasporic studies, particularly with relation to our nation's vibrant African American, West Indian and Caribbean communities.

Dr. Bonnett currently serves as a professor emeritus in the department of American Studies at the State University of New York (SUNY)—Old Westbury, where he also previously served as the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost. Dr. Bonnett is also the dean emeritus of the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences at the California State University—San Bernardino and was the first black Dean hired at the University. Having authored and coauthored four books and more than one hundred scholarly articles, Dr. Bonnett is truly one of the preeminent sociologists in the state of New York. Dr. Bonnett has dedicated his life to exploring and shedding light on the immigrant experience in the United States, and as a native of British Guyana, he is a testament to the incredible and critical contributions that immigrants have made to American academia.

I'd like to congratulate Dr. Bonnett on his retirement and on an incredible career. It is truly an honor to serve as his representative in Congress.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RUBEN GALLEG0

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 12, 2016

Mr. GALLEG0. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and was not present for one roll call vote on Tuesday, February 9, 2016. Had I been present, I would have voted in this manner:

Roll Call Vote Number 64—9/11 Memorial Act—yes.

HONORING LAURIE HARKNESS, PH.D., ON THE OCCASION OF HER RETIREMENT

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 12, 2016

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to join the many family, friends, and colleagues who have gathered as Dr. Laurie Harkness, founder and Director of the VA Connecticut Healthcare System's Errera Community Care Center, celebrates her retirement after decades of dedicated service to our community's veterans.

To say that Laurie is a remarkable public servant is an understatement. During her tenure with the VA Connecticut Healthcare System, Laurie has demonstrated an unparalleled commitment to ensuring that our veterans are receiving the best possible care and have access to the programs, services, and resources they need to live healthy, independent, fulfilling lives. While her contributions to veterans care are innumerable, the most well-known is the Errera Community Care Center which she founded more than twenty years ago.

Over the course of its history, the Errera Center has evolved into one of the leading centers of innovation in psychosocial rehabilitation and in the integration of the psychosocial and biomedical approaches. Serving veterans struggling with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders, homelessness, and/or aging, the team of multidisciplinary mental health professionals at the Errera Center work together to provide an array of community-based rehabilitative programs including day and crisis intervention programs, vocational programs, housing programs, homeless outreach and advocacy and case management programs. Providing a myriad of support to hundreds of veterans every year, the Errera Center has been nationally recognized for its exceptional model of care that emphasizes evidenced-based clinical programs provided in conjunction with a comprehensive network of community partnerships and repeatedly been awarded status as a VA Center of Excellence for the Care of Individuals with Mental Illness.

Laurie's work has also been recognized with numerous local, state and national awards and recognitions. She is the recipient of the Olin E. Teague Award, the highest VA clinical award given, as well as the distinguished Eli Lilly Lifetime Achievement Award for her work in developing programs that assist veterans with serious mental illnesses reintegrate back into their own communities. She has been recognized by Vietnam Veterans of America for her service and dedication to Vietnam veterans and their families and was awarded the "Excellence in Community Mental Health Services" award from NAMI, the first non-MD recipient and first VA employee to be so honored. Her legacy of service will serve as a standard for which to strive for generations to come.

I would be remiss if I did not extend a personal note of thanks to Laurie for her many years of guidance and assistance. Over my tenure in Congress, Laurie has been an invaluable resource for myself, my staff, and my constituents. Her expertise, compassion, and leadership has made all the difference and I consider myself fortunate to have had so many opportunities to work with her.

Laurie Harkness is a reflection of the very best in public service and her presence will certainly be missed by all of those fortunate enough to have worked with her as well as the countless veterans who have benefitted from her outstanding work. Today, as she reflects on her career with the VA, she can be proud of the indelible mark she has left on the agency. It is my great honor to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Laurie as she celebrates her retirement and extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to her for her many years of service. I wish her all the best for many more years of health and happiness as she enjoys her retirement.

HONORING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS FOUNDATION, INCORPORATED & THE 1976 CLASS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

HON. G.K. BUTTERFIELD

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 12, 2016

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 40th Anniversary of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Incorporated (CBCF) and the 1976 Class of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). Established in 1976, this non-profit, non-partisan education and research institution was founded by Nira Hardon Long, Albert L. Nellum and Congresswoman Yvonne B. Burke (CA). The CBCF's commitment to advancing the global black community by developing leaders, informing policy, and educating the public has not wavered and will remain steadfast for many years to come.

One of the CBCF's innovative initiatives is its virtual library project called 'Avoice.' Avoice: African American Voices in Congress launched in 2006 and has received over 27 million hits to date. Through this virtual portal people from around the world log onto the Avoice website to find out about the legislative work done by African American members of Congress.

The CBCF and the CBC have collaborated for many years on policy issues that would uplift the African American community in the United States including major laws like the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and legislation that created the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday. Even before the CBCF or CBC were created, African American members of Congress, black civil rights leaders, and others have been on the forefront advocating for criminal justice reform, environmental justice, voting rights protection, and economic empowerment for African Americans.

Mr. Speaker, when CBCF was founded in 1976, there were 17 members of the Congressional Black Caucus Congress who stood together to empower America's neglected citizens and to address their legislative concerns.

These members are—former Representatives Yvonne B. Burke (CA), Shirley A. Chisholm (NY), William Clay, Sr. (MO), Cardiss W. Collins (IL), Charles C. Diggs, Jr. (MI), Ron Dellums (CA), Harold Ford, Sr. (TN), Augustus F. Hawkins (CA), Barbara C. Jordan (TX), Ralph H. Metcalfe (IL), Parren J. Mitchell (MD), Robert N.C. Nix, Sr. (PA), Louis Stokes

(OH), Andrew Young (GA), and our two distinguished members still serving this institution—Representatives JOHN CONYERS, JR. (MI) and CHARLES B. RANGEL (NY).

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the 40th Anniversary of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and the 1976 Class of the Congressional Black Caucus and recognizing their tremendous contributions to our nation.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL MARRIAGE WEEK

HON. ROBERT B. ADERHOLT

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 12, 2016

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge and recognize that this is National Marriage Week. The sacred vows that a man and woman exchange as a part of the sacrament of marriage have been part of our culture from the very beginning of humanity. It's an institution that, over the centuries, has proven to be the best for raising a family, and creating self-sufficient and well-balanced children.

However, this week as we celebrate National Marriage Week, I remain deeply concerned that this sacred institution is suffering in our country. More than half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce. Fewer couples are choosing to marry. And there are still large numbers of women having children out of wedlock.

More than half of all babies born to women under the age of 30 are now born outside of marriage. Fifty years ago, that number was around 5 percent. While the culture we live in today is no doubt responsible for much of this shift, the government could be doing more to help this situation. Our laws do not encourage marriage, but in many cases, they also discourage marriage by imposing tax penalties on those who would like to marry.

So, as we recognize the importance of marriage, I believe that it's time that Congress remove the government-imposed financial barriers—which is often called the marriage tax penalty—that too often make marriage a second choice for these couples.

I am blessed to have been married to my wife, Caroline, for almost 22 years. Our partnership is one of the great joys of my life.

I am proud to recognize National Marriage Week and the institution of marriage here in the United States as well as around the world.

HONORING GEORGE PRESCOTT
BUSH AND JOSÉ ANTONIO
MEADE KURIBREÑA

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 12, 2016

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Texas Land Commissioner George Prescott Bush and Mexican Secretary of Social Development José Antonio Meade Kuribreña, who have been recognized as the 2016 Señor Internacional Award recipients by LULAC Council 12 in Laredo, Texas. For over

30 years, LULAC Council 12 has recognized Latinos on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border for their service to the community and exceptional individual achievements.

George P. Bush currently serves as the Texas Land Commissioner, a post in which he continues the public service legacy of the Bush family. Commissioner Bush was born in Houston, Texas, to former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and Columba Garnica Gallo. After graduating from Rice University, Commissioner Bush worked as a public school teacher in Miami. He then went on to earn a Juris Doctorate from the University of Texas Law School. After attending law school, he co-founded a private equity firm, Pennybacker Capital LLC, and later founded an energy consulting firm, St. Augustine Partners.

In 2007, Commissioner Bush joined the Naval Reserve and in 2010, he courageously served an eight-month tour of duty as an officer in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. In 2014, he was elected Texas Land Commissioner, beginning his political career. Commissioner Bush prides himself on supporting our veterans, increasing funds for public education, and providing a path for the U.S. to become energy-independent.

Secretary José Antonio Meade was born in Mexico City, Mexico, and is an economist, lawyer, diplomat, and currently serves as Mexico's Secretary of Social Development. He received his degree in Economics from the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, one of Mexico's preeminent institutions of higher learning. He continued his education at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, where he studied law and also received his PhD in Economics from Yale University. He served as a professor at ITAM and Yale University. He has received recognition for his research on Economic Analysis of the Law and has also been given the National Tlacaehlel Award.

Throughout his illustrious career, Secretary Meade has served his country in several important posts such as: Chief Executive Officer of the National Bank for Rural Credit, Chief Executive Officer of Financiera Rural, Secretary of Energy, Secretary of Finance and Public Credit, and Secretary of Foreign Relations.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have had this time to recognize Commissioner George Prescott Bush and Secretary José Antonio Meade Kuribreña.

HONORING RALPH VERSCHOOR

HON. JEFF DENHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 12, 2016

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor the birthday of Mr. Ralph Verschoor, who will be ninety-five years old on February 20, 2016.

In 1926, Ralph was born in Hot Springs, Arkansas. In 1930, he moved to Colorado with his family. His father then decided to move away from the cold and snowy Colorado area and ventured to Ceres, California.

On May 3, 1944, Ralph's life was forever changed when he was drafted into the U.S. Army where he served in the 503rd Airborne. He completed 16 weeks of basic training at

Fort Bragg in North Carolina before he was transferred to Fort Benning, Georgia where he underwent parachute training. Despite being injured on his first jump he continued with the training and successfully received his wings.

Before long, Ralph was sent to Fort Ord and then San Francisco, where he boarded a ship on a 31 day voyage to New Guinea. After departing New Guinea, Ralph travelled to the Philippines. There, in March 1946 on the Beach of Negros Island, he experienced combat for the first time. Ralph spent his time as a rifleman, but due to unfortunate circumstances, his weapon malfunctioned. He was stuck with this weapon until the 1st Scout was wounded and they were able to trade weapons. At this point Ralph became 1st Scout and spent six weeks leading his troops into the jungle. Requested by his Captain to become a combat medic, Ralph was tasked with giving first aid to his wounded comrades. He witnessed many traumatizing events in his line of duty that he will never forget.

The war ended in the summer of 1945. Ralph, as a combat medic, was asked to travel to Hiroshima, Japan to study radiation burns. After a six month stay, he was sent to Sendai, Japan to join a medical team aiding in the treatment of those exposed to communicable diseases. Upon returning from the war in 1946, Ralph made his way back home to California, settling in Escalon, where he has resided for the last 70 years. Ralph was elected to the Escalon City Council in 1957, and later served as Mayor.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring Ralph Verschoor for his 95th birthday and outstanding contributions to the community of Escalon as well as our country.

RECOGNIZING MEAGAN WARREN,
FOUNDER OF BOOKS FOR BED-
TIME, FROM BEXLEY, OHIO

HON. JOYCE BEATTY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 12, 2016

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the residents of the Third Congressional District of Ohio, I am pleased to commend Meagan Warren for being recognized by the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards as "Ohio's Top Youth Volunteer" in 2016.

A seventh-grade student at Bexley Middle School in my district, Meagan has always been an avid reader.

For Meagan, who learned to read when she was two years old, it is hard to imagine not having a book within arm's reach, especially at bedtime.

Unfortunately, many children her age do not have the same fortune.

One night, while reading in bed, Meagan thought about other children her age that had no books to read.

She committed herself to doing something about it.

Meagan's late-night inspiration spurred her into action and, with the help of her family, she founded Books for Bedtime, a nonprofit organization that has collected more than 14,000 books from neighbors and local businesses for low-income children since 2014.

Books for Bedtime's mission is simple: to distribute books to low-income children and to