

achievement and honor six researchers from the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) who were part of one of the most significant scientific discoveries in a century.

While hundreds of scientists worked together to make this discovery, I am especially proud of the researchers from RIT—James Healy, Jacob Lang, Carlos Lousto, Richard O'Shaughnessy, John Whelan, and Zhang Yuanhao. All of these researchers are members of RIT's Center for Computational Relativity and Gravitation, which is led by Manuela Campanelli. Her team was one of the first groups to initially solve Albert Einstein's strong field equations describing black hole mergers. Because of this legacy, it is fitting that the recent discovery helps further confirm Einstein's general theory of relativity.

As the only microbiologist in Congress, I know that every scientist hopes to have their predictions verified by direct observation. I also know that this is relatively rare, so I stand in awe of this RIT team that accurately modeled the merger of two black holes and predicted the gravitational waves that were detected. This monumental achievement marks yet another chapter in Rochester's rich history as a center of scientific innovation and discovery.

Rochester has helped pioneer important research and develop innovative products such as the Kodak Brownie camera, the Norden bombsight, and myriad high-powered lasers. Established in 1829, RIT has not only played a critical role in Rochester's past, it continues to ensure that Rochester remains a global center of excellence. RIT makes invaluable scientific contributions to the research community, but it is also a cornerstone of the Rochester community and helps provide local businesses with the talent they need to flourish.

Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of this discovery is that it allows us to pose new questions and push the bounds of our collective knowledge. There's no doubt in my mind that RIT will play an essential role in these forthcoming discoveries, and I am proud that millions of people will continue learning about the world around us thanks to the contributions of researchers like Dr. Campanelli and the other members of her team.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in applauding all of the individuals who helped contribute to this monumental discovery and especially the six researchers from RIT. These Rochesterians have helped fundamentally change our understanding of the world, and I am proud to support their work in Congress.

RECOGNIZING THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF VFW POST 5277

HON. DANIEL WEBSTER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Mr. WEBSTER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 5277, William Alfred Suggs Memorial Post in Clermont, Florida, celebrates 70 years of service to veterans and their families.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is a strong advocate for veterans ensuring they receive their earned entitlements and the care they deserve. The history of the VFW dates back to 1899 when veterans of the Spanish-

American War and the Philippine Insurrection founded organizations to assist wounded and sick veterans with securing benefits as there was no medical care or veterans' pension. Some of these veterans collaborated and started organizations which would be known as the VFW. The first chapters, founded in Ohio, Colorado, and Pennsylvania, quickly expanded reaching over 5,000 members by 1915; by 1936, membership had grown to nearly 200,000.

The VFW was an instrumental voice in the establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs, GI Bill for the 20th century, national cemetery system, and compensation for Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange and veterans diagnosed with Gulf War Syndrome. The VFW championed the 21st century GI Bill, passed in 2008, providing educational benefits to active-duty service members, and members of the Guard and Reserves.

It is my distinct pleasure to commend the VFW Post 5277 on their 70th anniversary, and I join the VFW in expressing appreciation for our veterans and those currently serving in the United States military.

COL. WILLIAM BARRETT TRAVIS LETTER

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following letter:

COL. WILLIAM BARRETT TRAVIS LETTER
FEBRUARY 24, 1836

There are those in history that paid for our freedoms with their lives. In 1836 Texas was fighting for its independence from the dictator of Mexico, Santa Anna. A small band of 180 patriots from numerous nations and states, of several races, stood defiant at the Alamo (in now San Antonio,) from Santa Anna's enormous invading army. The leader of the Texian patriots was a 27 year old lawyer from South Carolina by the name of William Barrett Travis. Surrounded by the enemy, Travis penned his famous letter seeking aid for the defense of liberty. It was 180 years ago:

BEJAR, FEBY. 24TH. 1836

COMMANDANCY OF THE ALAMO,

TO THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS & ALL AMERICANS IN THE WORLD—FELLOW CITIZENS & COMPATRIOTS—I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna—I have sustained a continual Bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man—The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken—I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls—I shall never surrender or retreat.

Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch. The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days.

If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country—Victory or Death.

WILLIAM BARRETT TRAVIS,
Lt. Col. Comdt. The Alamo.

Mr. Speaker, Col. Travis and his Texians all died defending our freedom at the Alamo.

Sixty days later General Sam Houston and his Texians defeated Santa Anna in the marshy plains of San Jacinto, winning independence from Mexico, once and for all. Travis's letter is a remarkable and inspirational statement for freedom and the spirit of liberty. Col. Travis is one reason my oldest grandson is named "Barrett Houston."

And that is just the way it is.

IN RECOGNITION OF DAVID BIEGLER

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the work of an outstanding Texan, David Biegler, as he completes his distinguished work as the long-term Chairman of the Board for Children's Health System of Texas (CHST). While serving as Chairman for Children's Health System of Texas, Mr. Biegler served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Southcross Energy since 2011 and has more than 47 years of experience within the energy industry.

Children's Health Systems of Texas' original location is in Dallas and has now grown to include the more than 30 other specialty and pediatric care centers located throughout North Texas. Children's Health Systems of Texas remains the seventh largest pediatric health care provider in the country—with more than 850,000 patient encounters annually and performing more than 28,600 surgeries at its two full-service campuses in Dallas and Plano. Children's Health is the only academic healthcare system in the Dallas-Fort Worth area dedicated solely to the comprehensive care of children from birth to age 18. Children's Health has also been recognized as (1) one of the most connected hospitals in the nation for its excellence in patient safety, patient engagement and clinical connectedness; (2) one of only six STS three-star designations for congenital heart surgery; (3) a Level IV Neonatal Intensive Care Unit—the highest qualification for such programs; and (4) a Level 1 Trauma Center for pediatric care.

I have seen the power of Children's Health System of Texas as both a Member of Congress and as the father of a patient. Our region is blessed to have the resources and expertise of CHST medical professionals and staff available to meet the needs of our children. So much of the CHST success story is due to the involved engagement of civil leaders like David Biegler. Together, those leaders have ensured the children of our region would never have to leave home to have the best possible medical care.

I have personally had the opportunity to work with Mr. Biegler over the years in Dallas on a number of issues important to our community, region and state. Besides serving as the Chairman of the Board at CHST, David has served as a director of Southwest Airlines Co. and Trinity Industries, Inc. David has also been recognized as an outstanding board member of CHST time and time again. In 2015 alone, he was recognized by the Texas Healthcare Trustees as an outstanding board member and by the Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council with the Kerney Laday, Sr. Trustee of

the Year Award for his dedication and commitment to CHST for over 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my esteemed colleagues to join me in wishing him all the best in his future endeavors.

HONORING ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. KEITH ELLISON

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Zion Baptist Church, to recognize and commemorate 127 years of religious devotion through community building and advocacy in North Minneapolis.

Zion Baptist Church, founded in 1889, has sought to provide a strong, steadfast foundation for their congregants through biblical teaching, equipping families through faith, and fostering an uncompromising belief in God. The church has fought for important changes in policy, community support systems, and physical safety—all led by their deep devotion to their faith.

For four decades, until 2012, the Reverend Curtis Herron led his congregation on the belief that “the church started in the building, but ended in the world.” Through his advocacy for affordable housing, racial equity, and job creation, Reverend Curtis Herron championed substantial improvements for Zion Baptist Church, and the Minneapolis community as a whole. The people of Zion Baptist Church have guided families along the path of faith while engaging them in local issues; and they show no signs of slowing down.

Zion Baptist Church is one of the largest and most influential African American churches in Minneapolis, and for the last 127 years their advocacy has helped make our community the best it can be. Their legacy of lifting up the most vulnerable in our community should serve as a reminder that faith calls us to stand up against injustice, no matter the form.

HONORING JOHN MEALEY ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT AS FOUNDING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF COACHELLA VALLEY HOUSING COALITION

HON. RAUL RUIZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, today I am honored to congratulate John Mealey on his retirement after 34 years of leadership in helping build communities and changing lives for thousands of farmworkers, service workers, and chronically ill residents through the Coachella Valley Housing Coalition (CVHC).

In 1982, Mr. Mealey led the way with community leaders to address the housing needs of hundreds of low income families in the Coachella Valley by forming CVHC. That same year, CVHC received its first grant of \$10,000 from Aetna Foundation and in 1986 they built the first low-income farmworkers complex in Coachella, Ca.

Fast-forwarding three decades—and thanks to Mr. Mealey’s diligent work and vision—he

has helped fundraise over \$700 million toward building more than 4,500 homes and apartments for low and very low-income residents in the Coachella Valley. Furthermore, under Mr. Mealey’s guidance, CVHC has created home ownership opportunities from Palm Springs to Blythe in the 36th Congressional district. This translates into a dream come true for families and a better and brighter future for generations to come.

In 2002, the Board of Directors and employees of the CVHC established the JFM College Scholarship Fund Program in honor of Mr. John F. Mealey. The Scholarship fund awards scholarships annually to students who reside in affordable housing communities developed by CVHC. The JFM has generated half a million in scholarship funds and benefitted more than 600 students.

Mr. Mealey’s extraordinary career began in Philadelphia at a nonprofit housing organization. Before joining CVHC in 1982, he worked at the Riverside Department of Housing and Community Development. Mr. Mealey also served as a board member on the California Coalition for Rural Housing, the National Rural Housing Coalition and the National Equity Fund.

Amongst the numerous reputable recognitions that Mr. Mealey has obtained throughout his remarkable career, he recently was honored with the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) award. This distinction is presented to those individuals who demonstrate the lifetime achievement of leadership in rural development, building and sustaining an organization that benefits rural communities and has a regional impact.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Mr. Mealey who for nearly four decades dedicated his time to better the lives of underserved communities. For his work and on behalf of the thousands of families of the 36th district of California, I would like to offer my sincerest thanks and congratulate Mr. Mealey for his exceptional commitment. I wish him and his wife Patricia the best on his well-deserved retirement.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably delayed and not present for roll call votes 83 and 84.

Had I been present. I would have voted yes on both Number 83 and Number 84.

HONORING WILLIE FRITZ FOR HIS DECADE OF LEADERSHIP AS FIRST SELECTMAN OF CLINTON, CT

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to thank a public servant from Clinton, Connecticut who has served his community with distinction for more than ten years. Mr. William

“Willie” Fritz, First Selectman since 2005, spent his decade of tenure leading the town into improved financial and physical shape, and constantly making himself accessible to town residents. Willie’s public service started in Clinton local government in 2000, when he served on the Public Works and Planning and Zoning Commissions and immediately displayed a knack for putting the town’s needs into action.

After his election as first selectman in 2005, Willie championed the needs of the people of Clinton. His legacy is visible in the beautiful buildings and public spaces around town. These efforts resulted in numerous state grants for the Main Street streetscape, the renovation of the Town Dock uplands, and a modern multi-use turf field at the Indian River Recreation Complex. Each of these spaces and the value they provide to the Clinton community is a testament to Willie’s achievements as a local leader.

One of Willie’s noteworthy achievements was in managing the renovation of the Andrews Memorial Town Hall. After two decades of inattention, the hall’s magnificent architecture required urgent repairs and adjustments. Willie secured vital funds from the state Commission on Historic Preservation, and ultimately restored the hall to its former glory. The beloved building, which houses offices, meeting rooms, a kitchen and auditorium, is now fit for use by the community, and is a destination for architecture historians and students.

Willie has also had a hand in the construction of the new Morgan High School, and in bringing new senior housing to Clinton. As Willie has said “Nobody is more hands-on than a first selectman in a smaller town.” Willie has been an exemplary town leader; responsive to his neighbors, forward-thinking in his vision for the town, and full of energy. His extraordinary career for some of us is not too surprising. After all, his mother Mary Fritz is a legendary State Representative in the Connecticut General Assembly, representing the towns of Cheshire and Wallingford. I not only served with Mary during my time as a State Representative, but sat next to her on the House Floor. She has the same commitment to the public interest as her son, and the State of Connecticut has benefitted greatly from the Fritz legacy.

I truly believe that Willie’s work for the people of our state is not done and hope he will find new ways to contribute to the public good. I ask my colleagues to please join me in thanking Willie for his many years of service as First Selectman in Clinton, and in wishing him well in the years to come.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on January 20, 2009, the day President Obama took office, the national debt was \$10,626,877,048,913.08.

Today, it is \$19,064,879,099,682.52. We’ve added \$8,438,002,050,769.44 to our debt in 6 years. This is over \$7.5 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could