

IN HONOR OF THE REVEREND
EARL WILLIAMS, JR.

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart and solemn remembrance that I rise today to pay tribute to a distinguished athlete, educator, spiritual leader, and dear friend of longstanding, Reverend Earl Williams, Jr. A memorial service will be held in his honor on Thursday, February 7, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. at Disciples of Jesus Ministries located at 228 Augusta Avenue in Thomasville, Georgia.

Earl was born in Thomasville, Georgia in 1931, to the late Billy and Flossie Adams-Williams. A product of Thomas County School System, he graduated from Douglass High School in 1953 and went on to obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Social Science from Fort Valley State University (then College) and a Master's Degree in Administration from Valdosta State University.

In 1953, he played baseball in the Negro National League with Jacksonville Eagles before signing a professional contract with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1955, and playing in both the Mid-Western and Pennsylvania Leagues. After retiring from baseball, he became the assistant baseball coach at Fort Valley State University and a scout for the Baltimore Orioles.

In addition to being an admired athlete, Earl was also an influential educator. In 1971, he served as a teacher and later as the assistant principal at Magnolia-Chappelle Middle School (then Magnolia Junior High School), before being promoted to the role of principal in 1972. After the closing of the campus in 1990, he transitioned to Central Middle School, where he served as the principal, until his retirement in 2000.

A trailblazer offirsts, Earl was the first African-American President of G.A.E. (Georgia Association of Educators) of Thomas County, the first African-American City Commissioner of Thomasville in 1982 (re-elected in 1984), the first African-American Mayor of Thomasville in 1986 (re-elected in 1988) and the first African-American Chairman of the Salvation Army. In addition to those milestones, when he served our nation honorably in the United States Marine Corps (USMC) at Camp Lejeune, he continued to play baseball and became the first African-American to play on a USMC Base traveling team. He was also the Grand Inspector General of the S.P. Jones Masonic Lodge No. 118 and a longtime member of the Albany Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Furthermore, he received numerous awards including G.A.E. Administrator of the Year; Salvation Army Man of the Year; an Honorary Doctor of Law Degree from Faith College; NAACP; inductions into the Thomasville-Thomas County Sports Hall of Fame, the Fort Valley State University Alumni Hall of Fame; a Distinguished Service Award from Thomasville/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce and Outstanding Service Award which I had the pleasure of presenting to him.

Earl accomplished much throughout his life, but none of this would have been possible

without the love and support of his late wife, Faye, his five children, his nine grandchildren, and the countless others who impacted his life over the years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me, my wife Vivian, and the more than 730,000 residents of the Second Congressional District of Georgia in extending our gratitude for the life and legacy of Reverend Earl Williams, Jr. and our sincere condolences to his family and friends during this difficult time. I pray that we may all be comforted by an abiding faith and the Holy Spirit in the days, weeks and months ahead. He leaves behind a great legacy in service to his beloved family and to all those whose lives he touched through his kindness and generosity.

RECOGNIZING ARLETTE GOMEZ
AND GISELLE TOVAR

HON. DOUG COLLINS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Arlette Gomez and Giselle Tovar, two students at Johnson High School in my home of Gainesville. Recently, these two young women put on an event for local foster children in order to encourage foster children and families.

As members of the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America Club in their school, they wanted to take on a project that would allow them to help children in the Gainesville area. After researching the county's foster care system, these two students decided to work on a project that would prioritize foster children.

On January 20, Arlette and Giselle hosted "A Luau to Foster Joy" at Johnson High School, an event designed to cultivate friendships among the children in attendance. Additionally, the event helped raise awareness of the county's foster care system.

In Hall County, there are currently 270 children in foster care with only 60 families willing to welcome them into their homes. By hosting this event, Arlette and Giselle hope to inspire more families to open their doors to children in need.

Northeast Georgia is proud to have students like Arlette and Giselle, who aspire to make a difference in our corner of the world. I wish these two young women the best as they continue their studies and work to highlight the local foster care system.

STRENGTHENING PROTECTIONS
FOR SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFICIARIES ACT OF 2018

SPEECH OF

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 5, 2018

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I strongly commend Ranking Member LARSON and Chairman JOHNSON on their bipar-

tisan bill to dramatically improve the Social Security Representative Payee program. We have a responsibility to ensure that this system is strong and fair to protect our vulnerable citizens. In addition to the multiple improvements in oversight and quality, I want to thank Representatives LARSON and JOHNSON for including provisions to improve the Rep Payee program for foster youth for which I advocated.

Currently, when foster youth receive Social Security benefits because they are disabled or their parent is deceased, disabled, or retired, it is common practice for State child welfare agencies to take the children's benefits for state revenue rather than preserving these funds for the youth's current or future needs. We have very poor understanding of who serves as representative payees for foster youth and whether they conserve the funds for these youth. This bill requires long-overdue data coordination between the Social Security Administration and state foster care programs. Requiring this data coordination is critical to ensuring that we know who is serving in the important fiduciary role for foster youth. Right now, we have no clear understanding of the number of foster youth with representative payees, whether those payees are state agencies or family members, and whether the funds are conserved for foster youth or used to plug holes in state budgets.

Just last month, the Social Security Advisory Board recommended improving the Representative Payee Program related to foster youth. The Board pointed out that state foster care agencies routinely are assigned automatically as the payee without any analysis if there is a better choice available. The Board highlighted that there can be an inherent conflict of interest in designating a state entity as payee given that the interests of foster care programs may conflict with the interests of the foster youth. The data required by this bill will help Social Security better focus on payee determination for foster youth to ensure that the payee will act in the best interest of the child. Further, it will provide data to help us understand how often state agencies are serving in this capacity and how they are using these funds. To advance this understanding, the bill requires a GAO study on minor beneficiaries in foster care and their representative payees.

In addition, this bill protects foster youth from overpayment errors made by the state. Under current law, if an overpayment occurs and the state foster care agency is the beneficiary, the foster youth is responsible for repaying the overpayment. This bill includes a protection so that if a state agency is the representative payee and an overpayment is made, the state and not the foster youth is responsible for the overpayment the state received.

These improvements are critical to improving the representative payee program for vulnerable foster youth. I am grateful to Ranking Member LARSON and Chairman JOHNSON for working to strengthen the Representative Payee program to protect vulnerable citizens and for including these significant protections and transparency provisions to support foster youth.

TRIBUTE TO MARK ABERNATHY

HON. KEVIN MCCARTHY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of Mark Abernathy, an incredible individual, close friend and trusted confidant, and to celebrate his life and service to our community in California's Central Valley, the great state of California, and our country. Mark will be missed by so many that have been influenced by his political acumen, his unparalleled wit, and his spirit and passion for his neighbors and community. He passed away on January 27, 2018, and I know that our community joins me in mourning this loss.

Mark was born and raised in the Land of Lincoln, appropriate given that the principles of Abraham Lincoln was a seminal influence that would eventually shape much of Mark's patriotism and worldview. From a young age, Mark learned the value of hard work and perseverance while growing up on the family farm with his sister Jill, his brother Mike, and his cousins, growing corn and raising hogs. During that time, he developed an adoration for baseball—and especially the St. Louis Cardinals—that would remain with him for the rest of his life. Mark attended Western Illinois University and paid his tuition fees by literally “singing for his supper” as a guitar player and singer for the “The Rising Sons,” a country western band that he was a member of all throughout college. He graduated with degrees in agriculture and biology and felt a call to serve his country shortly after, joining the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War and serving as a Captain and electronic warfare officer from 1968 to 1972.

The Air Force eventually brought Mark to California, where he first uncovered a natural talent for campaigning and an interest in local politics. While stationed at McClellan Air Force Base in Sacramento, he served as Chair of the Fairlake Young Republicans Club, where he met Cathy Swajian, who would become the love of his life and inseparable partner while raising two daughters and becoming a fixture in Republican politics.

Bakersfield welcomed the Abernathys when they moved in 1981, and Mark became involved in state and local politics through when he founded his political consulting firm, Western Pacific Research, which would grow to influence and create some of the most effective Young Republican groups and elect many elected officials on the local, state, and national levels through grassroots political campaigns. Mark was the type of person who never gave up—whether that meant working all throughout the night to finalize and execute campaign messaging or strategy, or just walking door to door to register voters and share his passion for community engagement. He adhered, and he made sure his campaigns adhered, to the values and principles enshrined in our Constitution and our nation's founding documents. Yet his great emphasis toward civic responsibility was only surpassed by his devotion to his faith and to his family, never missing a softball game or the opportunity to take his beloved daughters, Margaret and Madeline, to a baseball game. He was a

man of exceptional character and talent, and his unparalleled 97 percent candidate victory record serves as a simple testament to the success he had in mastering his craft.

Perhaps most telling of Mark's legacy are the many currently-serving elected officials whom he worked with and helped to shape, myself included. Many of my closest friends and colleagues in the Central Valley—as well as former Governor Schwarzenegger during the gubernatorial recall campaign—worked with and listened to Mark in order to win their campaigns and serve the community and country that has given so much to us all. Mark always stressed the importance of involving our youth in politics and bringing a sense of passion to all that one does. Mark's political talent made him incredible, but his devotion to God and ability to inspire faith in others is what made him exceptional. He never gave up hope that goodness and God's will would prevail with hard work and belief.

The city of Bakersfield, Kern County and the State of California have lost a brilliant mind and an integral citizen of the community, and Judy and I have lost a treasured friend. His passing was a shock to those who knew him, and we will miss his advice, humor, tenacity and character for years to come. But he will be remembered as a leader who inspired generations of Republicans to fight for their principles and beliefs and to remain bold in strengthening the ties among faith, family and community. On behalf of the House and the 23rd Congressional District of California, we remember the remarkable life of Mark Abernathy and extend our most heartfelt condolences to his wife, Cathy, and daughters, Margaret and Madeline.

HONORING EDWIN HAWKINS

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the extraordinary life of Edwin Hawkins, who passed away on January 15th at the age of 74.

An Oakland native, Edwin was a four-time Grammy winner and gospel music trailblazer, whose work inspired generations and helped shape the contemporary Gospel music industry.

His crossover hit, “Oh Happy Day”, was featured in the hit movie “Sister Act 2”, reached No. 4 on the Billboard pop chart and No. 2 on the R&B pop chart. And in 2007, he was voted into the Christian Music Hall of Fame.

Edwin was truly a man before his time. He was compassionate, caring, and never wavered from his faith.

I have known Ed for many years and he was a source of inspiration for me personally. He always spoke words of encouragement and like so many others, I am deeply grateful for his love and kindness, which brought me peace and joy over the years.

I offer my sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Edwin Hawkins.

CONGRATULATING JIM WOODS ON RETIRING FROM HIS ROLE OF PLATTSBURGH HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jim Woods on retiring from his role as Plattsburgh Highway Superintendent.

For the past 30 years, Jim has been a dedicated member and leader of the Plattsburgh Highway Department. Jim joined the department on January 4, 1988, and served as the Deputy Highway Superintendent for four years before becoming the Highway Superintendent in 2011. As Superintendent, Jim oversaw the year-round maintenance of over 90 miles of road, working to ensure safe travel for North Country residents.

On behalf of New York's 21st District, I would like to thank Jim for his three decades of hard work and dedication to his community, and wish him all the best in the years ahead.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF FALLEN MISSISSIPPI SOLDIER MARINE SERGEANT (SGT) DONNIE LEO FORD LEVENS

HON. TRENT KELLY

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

Mr. KELLY of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in memory of Marine Sergeant (Sgt) Donnie Leo Ford Levens who paid the ultimate sacrifice while defending our great nation on February 17, 2006, during Operation Enduring Freedom. Sgt Levens was killed when two CH-53E Sea Stallion helicopters crashed into the Gulf of Aden near Ras Siyyan, northern Djibouti, while on a training mission in the Godoria Range area.

Sgt Levens of Long Beach, MS, was assigned to the Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 464, Marine Air Group 29, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, II Marine Expeditionary Force, New River, N.C. He was deployed to Djibouti as part of the U.S.-led Combined Joint Task Force—Horn of Africa, a counterterrorism force. Sgt Levens was an Aircraft Ordnance Technician.

Sgt Levens's mother Margaret and brother Matt honored Sgt Levens by completing their studies at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in 2006. Margaret Levens said Donnie's courage inspired her to go back to school and earn a degree. President George W. Bush delivered the commencement address at the graduation ceremony held in Biloxi. President Bush praised Sgt Levens for his service and sacrifice.

Sgt Levens will be remembered for his courage and determination to keep America safe.