

HONORING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FIREFIGHTERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 30, 2019

Mr. CUMMINGS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 10th Anniversary of the African American Firefighters Historical Society. The African American Firefighters Historical Society was founded in Baltimore, Maryland on January 23, 2009 by two, now-retired, members of the Baltimore City Fire Department: Firefighter George Collins and Lieutenant Michael Jensen. It was started as part of an event celebrating the 55-year reunion of the first African Americans appointed to the Baltimore City Fire Department. While researching the history of African-American firefighters in Baltimore, it did not take long before they discovered that nearly every fire department around the country had its own story of African Americans contributing to their ranks.

The mission of the African American Firefighters Historical Society is to collect, preserve and disseminate historical data and information relating to the contributions made by firefighters of color, and others who have contributed to such history. This material is used to educate and mentor firefighters and the communities that they serve.

The Historical Society is also a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, and it hosts an annual Salute Dinner. This dinner honors African-American firefighters, entities, individuals, and dates that are significant to the fire service history of African Americans. It is the only event of its kind in the world, and they are proud that the dinner has become their signature event.

All the honorees over the last 10 years have been extremely deserving of their recognition. Most have never had their contributions acknowledged. These individuals are humble men and women, who would tell you that they were just doing what needed to be done. Whether it be to acknowledge a heroic act or some other significant act, such as being the first to reach a rank or position, accomplished by firefighters, the African American Firefighters Historical Society is always interested in finding these individuals. The organization also welcomes information about organizations who have reached historic milestones or anniversaries relevant to African-American firefighters.

To show just how relevant The African American Firefighters Historical Society has become, I would like to take a moment to share the stories of some of its honorees.

Stories of people like Edward Collic, who faced significant hurdles to becoming Baltimore City Fire Department's First African American Lieutenant Pilot. During promotion testing, Collic was given ten additional navigation questions by his Coast Guard examiner, effectively turning what is normally a 4-hour test into an 8-hour exam. Still, he passed and was reluctantly given his 100 Ton Masters Licenses. Collic worked as an Acting Lieutenant for thirteen years, being passed over for promotions several times despite consistently scoring first or second on the promotion exam.

In some cases, he was deliberately removed from the top of the list. Collic was finally promoted, possibly becoming Maryland's first African-American Fireboat Lieutenant. With a reputation for being the best Lieutenant Pilot, one night he was sought out by his Battalion Chief to respond to a train that had derailed with hazardous material on board. He took his fireboat up the Susquehanna River to Port Deposit, Maryland, on what would become the longest run in BCFD history.

The Society has also honored people like Mrs. Carrye Brown, on the 20th Anniversary of her appointment to the highest fire service position in the country. In January 1995, Brown was nominated by President Bill Clinton to be our Nation's first woman and first African American to head the U.S. Fire Administration. In that role, she was responsible for legislation, regulations and standards for all fire departments in the country. To this day, Mrs. Brown holds the record for the longest serving person in that position.

They also paid tribute to civil rights lawyers Kenneth L. Johnson and Gerald A. Smith. On December 6, 1971 they filed suit against the City of Baltimore to address discrimination in hiring and promotions within the city's fire department. This landmark decision changed the hiring and promotions processes in both the city's fire and police departments, benefiting countless individuals. Their 1973 victory cemented the legacy of their clients and rendered their firm a dominant force in civil rights litigation on the east coast.

The Society has also honored the Gorham Family. A tragic fire in August 1946 destroyed the home of Leroy and Lillian Gorham. Tragically, the couple lost three children: Jean, who was 5, Ruth who was 2, and Leroy Jr., who was only 11 months year old. In response, the community came together to establish Chapel Oaks Volunteer Fire Company in Prince George's County, Maryland. Without any knowledge or experience, men from all over the area started Maryland's only African-American Volunteer Fire Department. By the year's end, they purchased a fire engine and equipment and began providing fire protection for the Deanwood Park/Chapel Oaks Community. They have serviced Prince George's County ever since.

The African American Fire Fighters Historical Society has presented approximately 200 flags flown over the U.S. Capitol for honorees on significant dates of their accomplishments; obtained almost 1,000 Citations, Proclamations, Resolutions, Certificates of Recognition and Letters of Acknowledgment for honorees; successfully advocated for legislation to have a fire house named for an honoree; been instrumental in building partnerships, financing the design, and advocating for local government to establish The Racheal M. Wilson Memorial Park and Garden at the location of Racheal M. Wilson's death, the first woman killed in the history of the Baltimore City Fire Department, and sponsored Baltimore High School students' trips to Washington, D.C. for Capitol Hill tours and to visit my Braintrust panels at The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative Conference.

As the African American Firefighters Historical Society reflects on their many accomplishments, they ask, "what's next?" George Collins, Founder and President states:

"We are looking forward to creating a brick and mortar entity in the form of a fire

fighter museum. This will showcase the unknown and often buried contributions of so many African Americans in the fire service. Yet we will always fulfill the purpose of our organization. Give people their flowers while they can smell them, show them acknowledgments of their accomplishments while they can see it, and tell them how much you appreciate them while they can hear it."

For these reasons, we stop to highlight the endeavors of The African American Firefighters Historical Society over the past 10 years.

HONORING BRIAN McDONALD AT CONGRESSMAN VELA'S BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION

HON. FILEMON VELA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 30, 2019

Mr. VELA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Brian McDonald for his contributions to the Rio Grande Valley.

Mr. McDonald received a B.A. in Political Science and History from Texas A&M University, and a J.D. from the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University. After law school, Mr. McDonald settled in the Rio Grande Valley, where he handled state prosecutions in the Cameron County District Attorney's Office.

Mr. McDonald's outstanding work and commitment to public service led him to his current position as an Assistant United States Attorney with the United States Attorney's Office in Brownsville. In this capacity, he dedicates his efforts to keeping the community safe through the prosecution of federal crimes. Our community is a better place thanks to his pursuit of justice for all people.

Mr. McDonald serves as a board member of the Cameron County Young Lawyers Association, where he works to connect young lawyers to the community through service programs.

I am pleased to recognize Mr. McDonald for his successful career thus far in Texas' 34th Congressional District. We are all thankful for his dedication to serving justice, and inspiring the next generation of lawyers in the Rio Grande Valley. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing his potential and commending him in advance for his bright career.

INTRODUCTION OF PRIVATE STUDENT LOAN BANKRUPTCY FAIRNESS ACT

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 30, 2019

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the Private Student Loan Bankruptcy Fairness Act, a bill I introduced earlier today with my colleagues DANNY DAVIS and ERIC SWALWELL. This bill would provide critical relief to Americans in severe financial distress who are struggling with overwhelming private student loan debt.

Before 2005, private student loans issued by for-profit lenders were treated in bankruptcy like most other unsecured consumer debt,

such as credit card debt. Our bill will ensure that privately issued student loans will once again be treated like other consumer debt and be dischargeable in bankruptcy.

Private student loans have much in common with credit cards and subprime mortgages. For example, private student loans often have onerous interest rates with no caps and can include exorbitant fees and hidden charges. In addition, many lenders have used aggressive marketing and high-pressure sales tactics to target particularly vulnerable people, namely, young men and women without financial experience, and older Americans seeking to restart their careers by pursuing higher education and training.

To make matters worse, private student loans lack the critical consumer protections that come with federal student loans. For instance, private lenders are not required to—and typically do not—provide any of the deferments, income-based repayment plans, cancellation rights, or loan forgiveness programs that are available to federal student loan borrowers.

A hallmark of our nation's bankruptcy law is to give an honest but unfortunate debtor a chance to obtain meaningful relief. To that end, the law exempts very few types of debt from elimination through the bankruptcy process, and only for principled policy reasons, such as debts for child support, taxes, criminal fines and intentional injury.

In 2005, however, Congress changed the bankruptcy law without any substantive analysis so that student loans made by private, for-profit lenders became very difficult to discharge in bankruptcy.

Currently, the Bankruptcy Code prohibits the discharge of private educational debt unless the debtor, in addition to meeting the already stringent requirements for personal bankruptcy, proves that repayment would impose an, "undue hardship," on the debtor and the debtor's dependents. In practice, however, it's hard for a debtor to ever successfully meet this standard.

The current bankruptcy law unjustly punishes hardworking Americans who are simply trying to improve their lives by pursuing a higher education and became victims of predatory private student loan lenders.

We can do better.

I urge my colleagues to support the Private Student Loan Bankruptcy Fairness Act and restore the fair treatment of private student loan borrowers in bankruptcy.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FAIRNESS FOR BREASTFEEDING MOTHERS ACT OF 2019

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 30, 2019

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, today, I introduce the Fairness for Breastfeeding Mothers Act of 2019, a bill that would require buildings that are either federally owned or leased to provide designated private and hygienic lactation spaces for nursing mothers. For years, federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have encouraged breastfeeding—the benefits are so great that

the Affordable Care Act amended federal law to require employers to provide a designated, non-bathroom space for returning employees to pump breastmilk for their newborns, ensuring that new mothers would be able to continue this essential practice even after returning to work. My bill would extend this requirement to include not just employees, but visitors and guests to federal facilities across the nation.

In Washington, D.C. alone, there are millions of tourists who visit federal sites, such as the Lincoln Memorial and the Smithsonian Institution. Increasingly, families understand the unique benefits of breastfeeding, and visitors to these buildings who have newborns and babies should have a private space to breastfeed or pump. The benefits of breastfeeding are well-documented—breastmilk contains antibodies and hormones that boost babies' immune systems, and studies have shown lower risks of asthma, diabetes, respiratory infections, and other diseases among breastfed babies. Moreover, breastfeeding also has benefits for nursing mothers, who, research has shown, have lower risks of diabetes and certain forms of cancer. Given the significant public health benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and baby, already recognized in federal policy, my bill is a logical next step to ensure visitors to federal sites have access to clean, hygienic, and private spaces to nurse or pump.

It is also important to ensure that lactation spaces are accessible to individuals with disabilities. While the Americans with Disabilities Act does not apply to federal buildings, the lactation spaces required by my bill would be subject to a similar law, the Architectural Barriers Act, which requires buildings and facilities that are designed, built or altered with federal dollars or leased by federal agencies to be accessible to individuals with disabilities whenever possible.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill, which would provide access to designated lactation rooms for guests to federally owned or leased buildings.

RECOGNITION OF NORFOLK FIRE-RESCUE CHIEF JEFFREY WISE'S 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

HON. ELAINE G. LURIA

OF VIRGINIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 30, 2019

Mrs. LURIA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and recognize Chief Jeffrey Wise's 40 years of service with Norfolk Fire-Rescue. His selfless work, bravery, and dedication have made the City of Norfolk a better place.

The health of our community depends on public servants. I want to thank Chief Wise for dedicating his life's work to the safety, health, and wellbeing of his neighbors.

Chief Wise has been an effective leader. He has spearheaded innovations in the quality and type of service Norfolk Fire-Rescue provides, and has devoted himself to the mission of "preventing harm in the community and maintaining the public's trust."

His dedication to the mission is inspiring, and I am confident that he has improved the lives and safety of many in the community.

I congratulate Chief Wise on his retirement. I commend him for his selfless work, and I

want to thank him for faithfully caring for the City of Norfolk for 40 years. I am confident he will continue to make an impact on the community.

RECOGNIZING WILLIAM J. "HAPPY" FULFORD III ON HIS RETIREMENT

HON. BRADLEY BYRNE

OF ALABAMA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 30, 2019

Mr. BYRNE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a pillar of the Southwest Alabama community, William J. "Happy" Fulford III, on his retirement as Executive Director for Government Relations at the University of South Alabama (USA). After more than 35 years of leadership, Happy leaves a legacy of devotion to his alma mater, as well as lasting and impactful relationships throughout Alabama and the nation. There is no way to measure the number of students, faculty, leaders, and members of our community that Happy impacted over his career.

Happy has been devoted to the success and advancement of USA since his days as a student. He graduated from USA in 1972 with a bachelor's degree, and he later earned a master's degree in Graduate Education Leadership in 1991.

Happy is also remembered for his service to our country, as he served in the United States Army Reserve from 1972 to 2002. During his time in the Army Reserve, he served in Operation Desert Storm and retired as a Colonel, having commanded at the company, battalion, and group levels.

During his service in the Army Reserve and shortly after his undergraduate education, Happy served as the president of the USA National Alumni Association, connecting members of the USA community throughout the nation through his inspired leadership style and outstanding personality. Happy continually forged new paths for USA, serving as the University's first Director of Alumni Affairs in 1981, its first Development Director in 1986, and its first Executive Director of Governmental Relations in 1998.

Happy's list of achievements, experience, and contributions will never be fully appreciated. Few people in this life give as much and ask as little recognition as Happy Fulford. A founding member of the Higher Education Partnership, a member of the Business Council of Alabama, American Legion, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, and many other organizations, it is clear that his outstanding service knows no bounds.

As his well-deserved nickname suggests, Happy is known for his easy-going, sincere, and positive outlook on life, while also remaining extraordinarily dedicated to the students, faculty, and staff at USA.

As he enters the next chapter of his life, I wish Happy, his wife Sherri, and his entire family all the best as they get to enjoy more time with each other. I know that in this new chapter, Happy will continue to serve the University of South Alabama in every way he can through his tireless efforts to make the students of Southwest Alabama prepared for tomorrow and making our community a brighter, better, and "happier" place to be.