

and short-term disability insurance allowing coverage for non-work-related injury or illness or pregnancy, can also likely increase recruitment and retention of employees by the federal government.

I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

RECOGNIZING ALICE SEFCIK SULAK

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2019

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Madam Speaker, I'm honored to recognize the incredible life and achievements of Alice Sefcik Sulak of Temple, Texas. Her contributions to the region, as well as her commitment to maintaining the proud traditions of her Czech ancestry, have made her a beloved member of the Central Texas community.

Renowned for both her singing voice as well as her abilities to play multiple instruments, Alice was one of Texas' pioneering Czech vocalists who distinguished herself as an accomplished and respected musician with a distinctive and recognizable style. Throughout her life, she both mentored young musicians and helped popularize Czech music throughout Texas.

Alice remains a vital member of the Temple community. In 1923, her parents built Tom Sefcik Hall, a classic Texas dance hall. Alice grew up working at the hall, and in 1970 she took over the operation, which she continues to run today. Sefcik Hall is a community gathering place and the site of countless first dates, weddings, anniversary celebrations, birthday parties, and family reunions. While the number of dance halls across Texas are dwindling, the lights remain on at Sefcik Hall, where new memories are made every day.

Recognizing her invaluable contributions, the City of Temple has proclaimed November 17, 2019 as "Alice Sefcik Sulak Day." She is truly a local treasure and a fitting recipient of our recognition and appreciation. Her commitment to investing her gifts, talents, and abilities to improve her community is a deeply held creed that speaks to the generosity of a true and devoted citizen.

Alice Sefcik Sulak's life is the story of a woman unafraid to chase her passions and devote her time to make good communities great. I join all Temple residents in celebrating her on this special day.

GRAVE CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF JOSE DANIEL FERRER

HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2019

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Madam Speaker, I am gravely concerned for the welfare of Jose Daniel Ferrer, a courageous Cuban pro-democracy activist and hero of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU).

Ferrer was seized on October 1, 2019, and remains held without access to family, friends, legal counsel, international human rights

groups, or other concerned members of his organization.

Human rights groups including Amnesty International have cited alarming but unverified reports of torture and maltreatment at the hands of the regime's thugs, including the withholding of necessary medical care, food and water.

It is a disgrace that the King and Queen of Spain are in Cuba, while Ferrer languishes in prison, and have failed to exercise simple human decency by demanding his release, or meeting with other courageous independent democracy and human rights activists.

The regime in Cuba has the blood of innocents on its hands, those whose only "crime" was daring to speak against the evils of the dictatorship including:

Orlando Zapata Tamayo, who died in state custody on February 23, 2010; Juan Wilfredo Soto Garcia, who died on May 8, 2011;

Laura Pollan, the renowned leader of the Ladies in White, who died under suspicious circumstances on October 14, 2011;

Wilman Willar Mendoza, who died on January 19, 2012;

Aramando Sosa Fortuny, who died on October 28, 2019;

We also remember Oswaldo Paya and Harold Cepero of the Christian Liberation Movement, both of whom died on July 22, 2012 in a suspicious car accident that has not been fully and appropriately investigated.

The regime of firing squads, political prisoners, the Tugboat Massacre, the Brothers to the Rescue shootdown, the Black Spring, and the murders of activists continues its evils to this day. It continues to intimidate, detain, encourage acts of repudiation, and inflict brutal violence to suppress the Cuban people.

Jose Daniel Ferrer must be released immediately and without condition, and those who participate in vile human rights abuses must be held accountable. The world is watching. Should any harm come to Ferrer, the murderous Cuban dictatorship headed by Raúl Castro and his puppet Miguel Diaz-Canel bear sole responsibility.

RECOGNIZING MARY LAFORGE FOR THE 2019 MONTANA CONGRESSIONAL VETERAN COMMENDATION

HON. GREG GIANFORTE

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2019

Mr. GIANFORTE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mary LaForge of Crow Agency for the Montana Congressional Veteran Commendation for her service to her country and service to fellow veterans at Crow Agency.

Ms. LaForge served in the United States Air Force as a reprographic specialist. She received multiple commendation during her time in the Air Force, including the Air Force Overseas Service Ribbon and the Good Conduct Medal.

At the Crow Agency, Ms. LaForge has played a large role in providing many services to her fellow veterans. She coordinated with the Billings Vet Center to ensure mental health services are provided to Crow Agency veterans, assisted others with enrolling in pro-

grams with the Department of Veteran Affairs, and brought veteran employment fairs and job opportunities to the agency. Additionally, she placed a key role in organizing the Yellowstone Homeless Veterans Stand Down.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in commending Mary LaForge for her dedication and service to her country and community.

CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF AUSTIN TICE

SPEECH OF

HON. DEREK KILMER

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 12, 2019

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, more than seven years ago, Austin Tice, an American journalist and Marine Corps veteran, disappeared in Syria.

Since the day he vanished, his parents, family, friends, and supporters, have worked tirelessly to ensure that no stone is left unturned and no avenue ignored to see Austin return home safely.

In the seventh year of Austin's captivity, I ask that whomever holds Austin release him immediately so that he can return to his loved ones.

I also ask the assistance of the Government of Syria do whatever it can to help facilitate Austin's release.

There are things that transcend politics and diplomacy, bridge cultural divides, and need no translation across different languages.

Those are things like love and hope—represented by a mother and father who wake up each day with deep love and concern for their son and the belief that today could be the day when they get the chance to hug him again.

I ask for the help of whomever holds Austin and can assist with his release—without the assignment of blame or malice to anyone—so that this year is the last that Austin remains so far from home and his family.

HONORING ROSA EMILIA RODRIGUEZ-VÉLEZ

HON. JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2019

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the distinguished career of the honorable Rosa Emilia Rodríguez-Vélez, on her retirement as U.S. Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico.

The experience and commitment of U.S. Attorney Rodríguez-Vélez has been vital in the Puerto Rico District. Her record in this office is of outstanding performance in the face of the great challenges in the fight against violent crime, drug and arms trafficking, national security threats, human trafficking, organized crime, illegal entry into the U.S., and most notably the fight against public corruption.

U.S. Attorney Rosa Emilia Rodríguez-Vélez has served the public interest since 1977 in the Puerto Rico Department of Justice and since 1988 in the U.S. Attorney's Office. In that role she held numerous key positions in her career as First Assistant U.S. Attorney,

Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney, Civil Division Chief, Deputy Chief for the White Collar/General Crimes unit, Administrative Officer, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Coordinator and Chairperson, Violent Crime Coordinator, Basic Criminal Advocacy Coordinator and Supervisor, Public Affairs Officer and District Office Security Manager.

Ms. Rodríguez-Vélez was appointed U.S. Attorney by the Attorney General in June 2006 and received a presidential nomination in January 2007. On October 13, 2007, the seven judges of the United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico unanimously appointed Ms. Rodríguez-Vélez to serve as United States Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico. On October 4, 2011, Ms. Rodríguez-Vélez was re-appointed to a new term as United States Attorney, pursuant to the unanimous vote of the Court.

U.S. Attorney Rodríguez-Vélez has implemented numerous initiatives to combat drug trafficking and violent crime in Puerto Rico, including multiple drug strike forces responsible for over 2,400 arrests; an Illegal Firearms and Violence Reduction Initiative, responsible for over 500 arrests; and a RICO Unit to prosecute violent drug trafficking organizations. She has received numerous awards and commendation letters during her years of service from both the Puerto Rico and United States Departments of Justice, as well as from state and federal law enforcement agencies.

Her character has been tested many times, often facing unfair political attacks and obstruction, especially when addressing the fight against the scourge of public corruption, yet she has remained a steadfast prosecutor, always serving justice and believing in her oath to the U.S. Constitution and Law. Because I can attest to her courage, her integrity, her professional excellence and her heartfelt belief in justice and American values, I congratulate her on a well and faithfully executed career—42 years working in both the Puerto Rico and U.S. Departments of Justice, 12 of them as the U.S. District Attorney for Puerto Rico.

I personally admire the courage of Attorney Rosa Emilia Rodríguez and recognize her as a role model for women. I thank her for her service and, I wish her the best in all her future endeavors.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. A. DONALD McEACHIN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2019

Mr. McEACHIN. Madam Speaker, I was unavoidably detained on November 12, 2019 during roll call no. 610, On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, H.R. 4162, GI Bill Planning Act. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea." I was also unavoidably detained during roll call no. 611, On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, H.R. 3224, Deborah Sampson Act. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

RECOGNIZING LE GAUB FOR THE 2019 MONTANA CONGRESSIONAL VETERAN COMMENDATION

HON. GREG GIANFORTE

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2019

Mr. GIANFORTE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Le Gaub of Bozeman, a recipient of the 2019 Montana Congressional Veteran Commendation for his service to his country and leadership in his community.

Mr. Gaub is a veteran of the U.S. Army. In his distinguished service from 1972 to 2003, He earned multiple commendations, including the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Reserve Component Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and Armed Forces Reserve Medal.

Serving his community through Troops to Teachers, Mr. Gaub works as a program manager to secure funding for military veterans seeking to transition to careers in K–12 education. He is a friendly face around many schools in Montana and in veteran support groups and nonprofits where he invests much of his time. Since his start with the Troops to Teachers program, he has helped bring in a substantial amount of grants ensuring its success.

I ask colleagues to join me today in commending Le Gaub for his dedication and service.

HONORING THE KICK FOR NICK FOUNDATION

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2019

Ms. DeLAURO. Madam Speaker, just a few weeks ago I had the extraordinary opportunity to participate in a local fundraiser for the Kick For Nick Foundation and was so inspired by the generosity of the participants and the mission of the Foundation that I wanted to share the experience with my colleagues.

PFC Nicholas A. Madaras of Wilton, Connecticut served our country bravely in Iraq until his life was cut tragically short by an IED on September 3, 2006. He was just 19 years old and weeks away from the scheduled end of his deployment. Nick had been an avid soccer player, coach, and referee growing up and when he had last came home on leave he had shared stories about connecting with young Iraqi children through the sport, often using anything they could find as a ball, most times nothing more than a tin can. Nick asked friends and family to send him a few soccer balls to share with the children in Baqubah. Unfortunately, he never got that chance.

Yet, from their grief, Nick's family and friends found a new mission—a way to pay tribute to Nick's memory, his passion for soccer, and his desire to make a difference in the lives of the children he had met in the war-torn country where he served. Shortly after his passing, Nick's family was approached by Ken Dartley, also of Wilton, who had read Nick's story and asked to start a program collecting soccer balls in his honor to fulfill his wish to share his love and passion for the game with

Iraqi children. It was through this first effort that the Kick For Nick Foundation was born.

What began with a few soccer balls in a net donated at the James P. Whipple American Legion Post 86 in Wilton has since grown exponentially with over 50,000 soccer balls having been donated and distributed to date. The Kick For Nick Foundation has received donations from 47 of the 50 states and, prior to distribution, each one is inscribed three times with Nick's name. Initially the balls were distributed only by US troops in Iraq, but over the years, in addition to soldiers, the distribution network has grown to include US military contractors, volunteers, individuals, schools, and charitable organizations. Balls have been given to underprivileged children in more than 50 countries including Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, Bhutan, Guatemala, Colombia. Beyond the distribution of soccer balls, when they have the opportunity and the supplies, Kick For Nick has also provided uniforms, cleats, shin guards, personal hygiene supplies such as toothbrushes and toothpaste, school supplies such as pencils, notebooks and backpacks, as well as occasional food supplies.

As I walked through the fundraiser and the many who had gathered to support the Foundation, I was inspired by the displays showing pictures of troops distributing the balls and of notes of thanks from the soldiers distributing them as well as the young people receiving them. I had the opportunity to speak with Nick's father, Bill, as well as several of his family members, finding myself in awe of their strength and determination to ensure Nick's memory continues to make a difference in the world. The Kick For Nick Foundation is an extraordinary effort and a wonderful tribute to PFC Madaras. It is my hope that their success continues to grow and that they can continue in their mission to foster peace, good will and stability across the globe by collecting soccer balls and delivering them into the hands of underprivileged children around the world—honoring the memory of PFC Nicholas A. Madaras and giving life to his dream of bringing a bit of hope and joy to children living in difficult circumstances.

RECOGNIZING CHIEF DAVE SPILLER

HON. ERIC SWALWELL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2019

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the dutiful work of my constituent, Police Chief Dave Spiller, on the occasion his retirement from the Pleasanton Police Department after 17 years of service.

Chief Spiller joined the Pleasanton Police Department in 2002 after more than a decade serving the San Diego and Mountain View Police Departments. In 2011, Chief Spiller was appointed to be Pleasanton's sixth police chief. He has served in every sworn rank of the police profession—from officer to chief.

Chief Spiller's colleagues can attest not only to his professionalism but to his commitment to safety and quality of life in Pleasanton. His leadership as police chief was characterized by compassion, integrity and responsiveness to the city.