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### MSI STEM ACHIEVEMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 17, 2021*

Ms. JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the United States is facing grave challenges on many fronts. We are only beginning to emerge from a global pandemic, with the outlook still uncertain. Our critical infrastructure, our Federal agencies, and companies across all sectors are being hacked. We are racing to mitigate the destructive effects of climate change. Our economic competitiveness is threatened as competitors like China invest heavily in science and technology.

To solve these problems, we need a cadre of trained scientists and engineers pushing the boundaries of what we know and what we can achieve. So far, we have led the world in science and innovation with a STEM workforce that does not come close to representing the diversity of our nation. When a Black woman, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, is at the center of developing the mRNA vaccine that is helping us conquer the pandemic, we treat it as exceptional, instead of expected. If we maintain such a narrow perspective on who should be a scientist, if we continue to leave behind so much of our nation's brainpower, we cannot succeed.

The good news is, we have highly successful models for increasing the diversity of STEM graduates. Minority serving institutions have long played a critical role in training and educating students of color in STEM fields. Student bodies at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are the most diverse in the nation. These and other minority serving institutions (MSIs) offer access to STEM education and a pathway to research or other STEM careers to students who might otherwise have limited opportunities. MSIs employ tailored initiatives, policies, and practices that meet students where they are, academically, financially, and socially, while moving students toward higher levels of academic achievement.

For instance, HBCUs play an outsized role in educating African American STEM graduates. While HBCUs make up only 3 percent of the nation's colleges and universities, they graduate 32 percent of African American students earning bachelor's degrees in the physical sciences, 29 percent in mathematics, and 27 percent in the biological sciences. One quarter of African Americans with STEM PhDs earned their bachelor's degree at an HBCU.

MSIs have a proven track record of recruiting, retaining, and graduating underrepresented minority students with STEM degrees. However, more investment and outreach is needed to enable MSIs to fully realize their potential to contribute to the STEM workforce. The MSI STEM Achievement Act pro-

vides for increased transparency, accountability, and accessibility of Federal STEM education and research funding for MSIs. The bill directs the Government Accountability Office to compile an inventory of programs targeted to MSIs and make recommendations for how agencies can increase competitiveness of MSIs in such programs. The bill also supports research on the challenges and successes MSIs have had in contributing to the STEM workforce, including support for MSI Centers of Innovation to help scale up successful practices pioneered at MSIs. Finally, the bill requires the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to issue policy guidance for Federal science agencies to improve outreach to MSIs in order to increase awareness of and competitiveness in agency funding opportunities.

I want to thank Rep. WALTZ for joining me in introducing this bipartisan legislation. I also want to thank the 24 organizations and institutions that have endorsed H.R. 2027.

MSIs have charted a course to developing the diverse STEM workforce we need to ensure continued leadership in science and innovation. Let us empower these institutions, and others, to build on that success. I look forward to seeing a companion in the Senate and working with my colleagues in both bodies to get this legislation enacted.

### CHIEF STANDING BEAR NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

SPEECH OF

**HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 12, 2021*

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 810, legislation which authorizes the Department of the Interior to conduct a feasibility study of the Chief Standing Bear National Historic Trail.

From his birth on the banks of the Niobrara River in Nebraska until his death in 1908, Chief Standing Bear spent his life in a constant struggle to gain equality and justice for Native Americans.

Chief Standing Bear and the Ponca Tribe were forced in 1877 by federal treaty to leave their homeland in Nebraska for Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma.

The hardship of travel and the conditions of Indian Territory caused the deaths of many members of the tribe, including Chief Standing Bear's son.

Determined to bury his son in his homeland, Chief Standing Bear led 30 members of his tribe back to Nebraska, where federal authorities detained him.

As a result, Chief Standing Bear became the first Native American recognized as a person in a federal court decision rendered in Omaha at the trial following his return.

Standing Bear's case, *United States, ex rel. Standing Bear, v. George Crook*, started in May 1879. The U.S. government argued, "that [Standing Bear] was neither a citizen, nor a person, so he could not sue the government."

Standing Bear's lawyers argued that under the Fourteenth Amendment, Standing Bear and his fellow Ponca were both citizens and people and entitled to the same constitutional rights as other citizens of the United States.

The court fundamentally agreed with Standing Bear, writing, "That an Indian is a PERSON within the meaning of the laws of the United States . . ."

Following the decision, the judge released Standing Bear and his people, and they returned to their lands by the Niobrara where Standing Bear finally buried his son.

The Chief Standing Bear National Historic Trail tracks the 550-mile path traces the journey the native Poncas were forced to make in 1877 to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma.

The trail also marks the route the tribe took in 1879, when they returned to their homelands in present-day Nebraska.

The nation has invested a great deal in protecting national parks and historic places due to their unique beauty, typographical features, or historic relevance.

The stories that make up the American experience have, for far too long, been limited to those of one group of Americans.

The limited view of what is of value or interest to the American public has changed with the establishment of a Native American History Museum and most recently the opening of the National African American History and Culture on the Mall.

The "whites-only" version of American history must end and at the same time we can make room for other American stories.

The history of the United States is more complex and immensely richer than would be apparent if we only consider the history of one group of people.

For this reason, last Congress I rose in support of the Emancipation National Historic Trail Act, which helped establish the Emancipation National Historical Trail, which will tell the story of African Americans and will preserve for future generations the rich history of the newlyfreed slaves who journeyed to Houston in search of economic and political opportunity, and greater religious and cultural freedom.

Similarly, the development and designation of the Chief Standing Bear trail is one more important step in the ongoing goal to educate the public about Chief Standing Bear and the Ponca tribe's forced relocation to Oklahoma.

This story transcends race, ethnicity, culture, and serves as a starting point to bringing about a greater understanding of tribal sovereignty, tribal rights, human rights, and equality for all peoples.

The establishment of this trail will increase the general public's knowledge and awareness of the story of Ponca Chief Standing Bear, including his journey to Oklahoma and back and the historic court case in Omaha.

For this reason, I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote in support of H.R. 810.

### HONORING FIREFIGHTER RANDY DIRIENZO

**HON. JOHN JOYCE**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 18, 2021*

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Firefighter Randy Dirienzo for his 36 years of service with the Meyersdale Volunteer Fire Department in Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

Firefighters' commitment and service to our community are invaluable. Volunteer firefighters often are called on to respond to emergencies of all types. From battling structure fires to conducting search and rescue operations, volunteer firefighters respond immediately whenever disaster strikes. These heroes often go above and beyond—they teach first aid, educate students about fire and other dangerous hazards, and even install car safety seats for children. Through their diverse and often-difficult work, volunteer firefighters provide lifesaving services and are a staple of our local community.

Firefighter Dirienzo has worked throughout his career to serve the people of Somerset County. On behalf of Pennsylvania's 13th Congressional District, I thank him for his work to protect life and property in our community and wish him continued health, safety, and success.

HONORING ROBERT STENSURD AS  
IOWAN OF THE WEEK

**HON. CYNTHIA AXNE**

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 18, 2021*

Mrs. AXNE. Madam Speaker, as Mental Health Month begins, I rise to ask the House of Representatives to join me in honoring Drake University Graduate Professor of the School of Education's Department of Leadership, Counseling and Adult Development, Robert Stensrud.

Professor Stensrud has been serving Iowa and its residents since he moved from Minnesota in 1970. He has dedicated his career to serving those with mental health needs and disabilities. He began his post-college career working with the Iowa Department of Education's Rehabilitation Education and Services Branch. It was here where he provided vocational rehabilitation at the State Mental Health Institute serving inpatients experiencing acute psychosis, substance abuse, and related disorders. In this position, he began to understand the importance of having a solid, dependable, and loving community. Most people who were released from his care did not have a community to return to, so they often struggled to survive in society.

Professor Stensrud has since dedicated his career to ensuring that all people feel important and seen. Some of his recent research highlights the childhood to prison pipeline and school to prison pipeline, where without a sense of community and belonging, many individuals find themselves in less than ideal circumstances to combat their feeling of being an outcast. Professor Stensrud understood that in order to make a difference, it is essential to work with students from a young age to help combat these issues. Professor Stensrud has done research through a LAUNCH Grant funded by Drake Head Start and the Iowa Department of Public Health on how mental health consultation can help improve coordination services for kids and their families, as well as how to train teachers and first responders to identify signs of trauma in children and act accordingly.

Professor Stensrud's next project will center around documenting the history and current operations of legacy farms in Iowa. Maintain-

ing long-standing legacy farms is no easy task, and the pressures often become too much for farmers. These stressors have been a large contributing factor to the increasing rate of suicide among farmers. Professor Stensrud wants to ensure that farmers in Iowa feel seen and appreciated while honoring their family's legacy and incredible accomplishments.

If Professor Stensrud's had one message to leave people with, it would be to show kindness and compassion to others. It is essential that we take care of those around us who struggle with their mental health or who are in a tough situation. His greatest joy and the motivation he has for being a professor is watching his graduates go on to positively impact others and make the world a better place. As Professor Stensrud would say, you may not be able to change the world, but you can change a life that goes on to save another life, and another after that. Making people feel loved and wanted is the first step, and one I believe we should all strive to achieve. We should not allow people to suffer in silence, rather be an ear for them. It is my honor to recognize Professor Robert Stensrud as our Iowan of the Week.

IN RECOGNITION OF JOHN  
CARLSON'S CAREER IN PUBLIC  
SERVICE

**HON. MIKE GALLAGHER**

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 18, 2021*

Mr. GALLAGHER. Madam Speaker, today I rise in honor of the career and service of Hobart, Wisconsin resident, Mr. John Carlson.

Mr. Carlson's notable Transportation Security Administration (TSA) career began in 2002, serving as the Assistant Federal Security Director (AFSD) for the Outagamie County Regional Airport, where he played a major role in the start-up of several TSA activities and assumed responsibility for day-to-day aviation security. In 2006, he was reassigned as the AFSD-Generalist at the Austin Straubel International Airport (GRB) Hub and Spoke Federal Security Director (FSD) staff where he handled compliance oversight, customer service, property accountability, safety, and model workplace strategies.

Given his extensive knowledge and leadership skills, Mr. Carlson would go on to assume roles where he was trusted to oversee a majority of TSA operations in four separate airports in northern Wisconsin: Austin Straubel International Airport, (GRB), Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA), Rhinelander-Oneida County Airport (RHI) and Appleton International Airport (ATW formerly Outagamie County Regional Airport).

Before beginning his career of service with TSA, Mr. Carlson served the United States honorably for twenty years in the U.S. Army as an infantry and military intelligence officer until his retirement in 1995 as a Lieutenant Colonel. Mr. Carlson's dedication and leadership in the state of Wisconsin are incredibly valuable, and the service he provides to Northern Wisconsin and his country is remarkable.

As we look back on Mr. Carlson's career, there is no doubt that he dedicated his life and

career to making the world around him a safer, better place. Mr. Carlson's continued service to both his country and his community is worthy of our highest admiration.

HONORING FIREFIGHTER CRAIG  
NOLTE

**HON. JOHN JOYCE**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 18, 2021*

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Firefighter Craig Nolte for his 36 years of service with the Meyersdale Volunteer Fire Department in Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

Firefighters' commitment and service to our community are invaluable. Volunteer firefighters often are called on to respond to emergencies of all types. From battling structure fires to conducting search and rescue operations, volunteer firefighters respond immediately whenever disaster strikes. These heroes often go above and beyond—they teach first aid, educate students about fire and other dangerous hazards, and even install car safety seats for children. Through their diverse and often-difficult work, volunteer firefighters provide lifesaving services and are a staple of our local community.

Firefighter Nolte has worked throughout his career to serve the people of Somerset County. On behalf of Pennsylvania's 13th Congressional District, I thank him for his work to protect life and property in our community and wish him continued health, safety, and success.

VA TRANSPARENCY & TRUST ACT  
OF 2021

SPEECH OF

**HON. MARK TAKANO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 17, 2021*

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support Representative BOST's bipartisan legislation, the "VA Transparency and Trust Act," or H.R. 2911, and for which Representative PAPPAS, Representative MANN, and I are original co-sponsors. This bill provides additional oversight for the funds Congress made available to VA through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and the CARES Act in 2020, as well as the American Rescue Plan which we passed earlier this year.

The purpose of H.R. 2911 is to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a detailed plan for obligating and expending coronavirus pandemic funding made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security, or CARES Act, or the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. H.R. 2911 also requires the VA Office of Inspector General to report to Congress semi-annually on VA's actual expenditures and obligations, comparing it to their detailed plan, and on other subjects. Finally, H.R. 2911 requires the Comptroller General of the United States to report to Congress twice—in 2022 and 2024—