

On behalf of Florida's 24th Congressional District, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Edwidge Labbe for her present and future accomplishments.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF
NATIVE AMERICAN CONNECTIONS

HON. RUBEN GALLEG0

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 10, 2022

Mr. GALLEG0. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Native American Connections, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

Founded in 1972, what once was a small grassroots organization that focused on Native American men and substance abuse has blossomed into an operation of 21 sites throughout Phoenix. What once was just a focus on substance abuse, Native American Connections expanded its reach to affordable housing, health, homelessness, Native American healing and many other projects that affect over 10,000 individuals and families each year. Native American Connections especially takes pride in their community development resources and projects that strengthen the Native American Community and helps celebrate the rich cultural history that is so essential to America today.

Through the organization's core values of empowerment, integrity, stewardship, spirituality, and others, Native American Connections has been able to positively affect the lives of countless people and families for 50 years. Their mission of "Improving the lives of individuals and families through Native American culturally appropriate health, affordable housing, and community development services," has not only been accomplished but continues to do so.

I would like to again congratulate Native American Connections on a remarkable 50 years and look forward to seeing how you change the world next.

RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED WAY OF
TARRANT COUNTY

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 10, 2022

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the United Way of Tarrant County as it celebrates its 100th anniversary. In 1922, the Fort Worth Community Chest was created when a group of local leaders came together to merge the fundraising efforts from a variety of different charity organizations. These community leaders recognized that working together, united-as-one, was a superior strategy as opposed to competing against each other for charitable resources. This early non-profit organization was the forerunner of today's United Way of Tarrant County.

From its inception, the new organization focused on key initiatives to not only identify problems faced by Tarrant County residents, but to also address the reasons the problems exist in the first place. They have forged cru-

cial partnerships with key community stakeholders. Engaging local governments, fellow non-profits, corporations, and small businesses to collectively combat county-wide challenges pertaining to education, financial stability, and community health. Continuing its growth and assistance to communities, the organization hit a major milestone in 1973, when it became officially known as the "United Way of Metropolitan Tarrant County".

The United Way of Tarrant County continues to empower residents, donors, volunteers, businesses, and other groups who provide crucial support to enable the organization to fulfill its mission to improve the overall quality of life for those in need. Through building trust and relationships with the community, the United Way has always encouraged residents to unite together in order to further worthwhile change and build stronger communities.

I would like to express my admiration and well wishes as this worthwhile humanitarian organization celebrates its centennial. The United Way of Tarrant County is holding its celebratory "Get United Day" event on Thursday, November 17, 2022, at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas in honor of the 100th anniversary of its founding. The United Way has had a tremendously positive impact on the well-being of Tarrant County's citizens and will undoubtedly do so for decades to come.

AWARDING 1ST CLASS PETTY OFFICER JOHN EDWARD PAGE A
CONGRESSIONAL VETERAN COMMENDATION

HON. PAT FALLON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 10, 2022

Mr. FALLON. Madam Speaker, I am honored to present 1st Class Petty Officer John Edward Page, U.S. Navy with a Congressional Veteran Commendation. His service and sacrifice through the Navy exemplify his national pride and embodiment as a role-model citizen to serve the country he loves. This is a very humble gentleman who is committed to being good to others and honoring his sacred Nation.

During his 10 years of military service in the Navy, 1st Class Petty Officer Page served by operating sonar radar missiles on Naval ships that have contributed to victories on the battlefield and had received many service accommodation awards while in Vietnam. After proudly serving the Navy and defending our Nation, 1st Class Petty Officer Page has been incredibly active in his community and has participated in prominent positions since his exit. This includes his time given to not just work at Texas Instruments in Sherman, Texas, but to come out of retirement to help set up divisions of the company all over the world.

His passion for his community also shines as he will operate on, and repair vehicles for people free of charge, or help those in need through his small property rental business. First Class Petty Officer Page has been more than helpful, he has been life changing for a lot of people in his community and throughout his service.

I am beyond honored to have 1st Class Petty Officer Page in Texas' 4th Congressional District and am privileged to award such a distinguished citizen for his sacrifices.

HONORING U.S. AIR FORCE LIEUTENANT COLONEL OLGA E. CUSTODIO

HON. JOAQUIN CASTRO

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 10, 2022

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, today, I rise in honor of Lieutenant Colonel Olga E. Custodio for her service to our country and the San Antonio community. Lt. Col. Custodio graciously served on my 2018 Military Service Academy Nomination Board and played an essential role in helping local students begin their military careers.

Lt. Col. Custodio knew the path to her dream would not be easy. While studying at the University of Puerto Rico, she was denied the opportunity to participate in the university's Reserve Officer Training Corps program because women were not allowed at that time.

Never giving up hope, she went on to fulfill her dream of becoming a commissioned military officer—and more.

As the first Latina to complete U.S. Air Force Undergraduate Pilot Training, she graduated in the top five percent of her class (of 48) with a fighter qualification to fly the T-38 as an instructor pilot. Lt. Col. Custodio points to three principles that have helped her become successful in a profession dominated by men: overcoming self-doubt, staying open to possibilities, and seeing herself as an equal.

A female military aviation pioneer, she served for 24 years in the U.S. Air Force, retiring as a lieutenant colonel. She received an Aviation Safety Award for superior airmanship for her handling of an engine failure in-flight emergency.

After transitioning to the U.S. Air Force Reserve, Lt. Col. Custodio became the first Latina commercial airline pilot for American Airlines and was later upgraded to captain. In addition to the T-38T, she flew the T-41, B-727, F-100, B-757, and B-767. She owns a Cessna T210L and has also flown several general aviation aircraft including the Stearman biplane, Cessna-172, Beechcraft-35 V-tail, Cirrus Vision Jet, and a few others.

Today, Lt. Col. Custodio is retired with over 11,000 flight hours to her name. Now a speaker and community leader, she serves on the board of several nonprofit organizations, including the Latino Pilots Association, Order of Daedalians, Dee Howard Foundation, and Women in Aviation Alamo City, which advocate for inspiring and empowering students, especially those from underserved communities, to pursue careers in aviation and aerospace.

Since 2018, Lt. Col. Custodio has supported the Experimental Aviation Association (EAA) and has moderated several all-female aviation panels during AirVenture at Oshkosh, WI. As a STEM advocate, she also volunteers her time as a speaker and role model at local schools, universities, corporations, and military base groups, encouraging young women and men to reach for their dreams.

Lt. Col. Custodio is a mentor with the Women in Aviation International, Aviation Explorers, and the School of Aeronautics of the InterAmerican University in Puerto Rico. In 2017, she was inducted into the San Antonio Aviation and Aerospace Hall of Fame.

Lt. Col. Custodio recently co-authored the "Latinas in Aviation" anthology and is included

as one of the 30 inspiring Latinas and Latinos who have shaped the United States in “Nuestra América,” published by the Smithsonian Institution. She is the honoree of the 35th Hispanic Heritage Foundation—2022 STEM Award.

By pioneering many firsts during her career, Lt. Col. Custodio has shattered stereotypes and served as a powerful role model for those aspiring to become a pilot. As a pioneer who overcame tremendous challenges to excel in a male-dominated profession, she gained essential life insights and perspectives that she shares with everyone, especially women working to achieve their dreams.

Lt. Col. Custodio lives in San Antonio, Texas, with her husband of 48 years, Edwin, and they have two children, Marcia and Edwin II, and one grandson, Jedi.

Madam Speaker—I am proud to recognize a member of the San Antonio community who is a shining example of our country's strength in diversity. Lt. Col. Custodio is an inspiration to the Latino community and continues to display an immense commitment to public service. I'm grateful that her knowledge and experience have helped usher in the next generation of military leaders. I wish her and her family the best.

HONORING MICHAEL “MIKABEN”
BENJAMIN

HON. FREDERICA S. WILSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 10, 2022

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Madam Speaker, as a congressional representative of the Haitian community in South Florida, I rise to honor the life and legacy of Haitian music icon Michael “Mikaben” Benjamin.

Born in 1981 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti to legendary Haitian singer Lionel and famed doctor Roseline Benjamin, Michael was just 16 years old when he was introduced to the Haitian music scene with his performance of “Nwèl Tristès” alongside his sister Melodie Benjamin. He released his first album Vwayaj that following year, which featured one of his most popular hits, “Ou Pati.” The success of “Ou Pati” would pave his musical journey as a singer, composer, and producer. He would go on to release more hits such as “Ayiti Se,” “Ti Pam Nan,” “Fe Lapli,” and “Marry Me.” He would also sing and produced hits such as “Fanm Sa Move” and “Baby I Missed You” for Carimi and hits for other global music acts including Kai, Enposib, Harmonik, Kreyol La, T-Vice, Karizma, Alan Cave, Ruthshelle Guillaume, Leila Chicot, J-Perry, and Lionel Benjamin, his father. Mikaben's music transcended genres and cultures. Along with his musical accomplishments, Mikaben will be remembered for being a loving son, husband, father, patriot, mentor, and philanthropist.

He empowered many Haitian children through his Ti Souf Foundation. The image of him draped in the Haitian flag while performing with Carimi, moments before his passing, is indelibly etched in the minds and hearts of millions of Haitians and others around the world.

On October 15, 2022, Mikaben suddenly collapsed while walking off stage after performing his hit song “Ou Pati.” He was later pronounced dead despite medical intervention.

He was performing in front of a sold-out audience at a reunion concert for Carimi, a famed Haitian band, that was held at Eastern Paris? Accor Arena. Mikaben is survived by his pregnant wife Vanessa Fanfan, his two children, and his parents, Lionel and Roseline Benjamin. He is also survived by his two siblings and countless fans from around the world.

Understandably, the Haitian community has been devastated by the sudden passing of Mikaben. The community has galvanized to honor him and support his family. Madam Speaker and everyone in this nation, please join me in honoring the life and legacy of legendary musician Michael “Mikaben” Benjamin.

HONORING THE LIFE OF JUDGE
FRANCES MUNOZ

HON. J. LUIS CORREA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 10, 2022

Mr. CORREA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Frances Munoz, our nation's first Latina judge. Judge Frances Munoz died on October 17, 2022, of natural causes. She was 92 years old.

Judge Frances Munoz has the distinction of being the first Latina female appointed or elected to the bench in California and the first Latina female appointed or elected as a trial court jurist in the United States. She served for 23 years in the Orange County Municipal and Superior Courts and an additional 15 years as an Assigned Judge.

From humble beginnings, Frances was born at the height of the depression on September 18, 1930, the fifth of eleven children, in the mining town of Miami, Arizona. The family moved to Puritan, Colorado, and her father continued to work in the coal mines until the mines “played out.”

In 1941, the family moved to Corona, California, and joined the thousands of others working in farm labor. Frances and her siblings joined their parents in the fields during the summers picking tomatoes, grapes, and other crops in the Fresno area, sometimes sleeping outdoors.

Judge Munoz inspired her younger siblings to study and pursue higher education. After high school, she went to work selling furniture and she paid for the college expenses of her siblings.

Undaunted, Judge Munoz pursued her own education by attending night classes at Los Angeles City College, UCLA and law school while managing Atlas Furniture stores during the day. In 1972, Judge Munoz received her law degree from Southwestern University School of Law where she was a member of the Law Review.

She moved to Orange County, where her brother Greg, a graduate from USC law school, had opened a practice. (Greg later became an Orange County Superior Court judge and served alongside Frances on the bench.)

In 1972, Frances joined the office of the Orange County Public Defender, where she was the first Latina and the second woman to be hired in that office.

In 1974, she and several Latino attorneys established the Orange County Mexican-American Lawyers Club, which was later renamed the Hispanic Bar Association of Or-

ange County. One of their goals was to ensure that more Latinos, who were qualified and experienced, be appointed or elected to the bench. As a result of the efforts, today there are 19 Latino judges out of 124 Superior Court Judges on the Orange County bench and two Latino justices out of eight Appellate Court justices in Orange County.

On January 25, 1978, Governor Jerry Brown's office telephoned Frances Munoz to advise her that she had been appointed as a Judge in the Harbor Municipal Court in Orange County. She was not at her desk. She was in court representing a defendant in a felony jury trial.

As a Deputy Public Defender, she was known as a zealous advocate. But she was also noted for being civil with opposing counsel and respectful of the court. She was also acknowledged for creating and meticulously cataloging 3x5 cards in a small box. On each card she wrote out the facts and holding of the appellate court in key cases involving “furtive gestures,” “search of trunk,” and other criminal law issues. She would quickly retrieve a key citation during a motion or trial.

Within months of her appointment, she was opposed by a male Deputy District Attorney. Several Harbor Municipal Court judges, and multitudes of Orange County attorneys, court staff, bailiffs, police officers, and clergy rallied around her to host fundraisers and to support her in the retention election. Her ten brothers and sisters and their children and parishioners from her church, St. Joachim Catholic Church in Costa Mesa, canvassed neighborhoods to get out the vote. In that 1980 election, Judge Frances Munoz was retained with the largest plurality of votes of any challenged judge in the state. Four other judges in Orange County lost their seats that year. She was never challenged again.

In 1980 and 1990 she was elected the Supervising Judge of the Harbor Municipal Court and in 1990 was also recognized as the Outstanding Judge of the Year by the Orange County Women Lawyers Association. In 1976, she co-founded the Orange County Hispanic Education Endowment Fund which awards college scholarships to Latino scholars.

In 2001, Judge Munoz retired from the bench, but continued her public service as an assigned judge until 2016. She also served on the board of directors of THINK—Teaching, Helping, Instructing Kids and boards of other non-profit organizations.

Every Thursday she would tutor students at Santa Ana's Madison Elementary school. She was also a keen real estate investor who purchased several commercial and residential properties. She always accommodated nieces and nephews in her spacious Corona Del Mar home while they studied and earned their bachelors, masters or medical degrees at the University of California, Irvine.

Judge Munoz is survived by four sisters, Margaret Munoz, Vera Munoz-Harrison, Rosie Schirling, and Angie Quintana and 25 nieces and nephews and 45 great nieces and nephews.

Please join me in celebrating the long, accomplished life of Judge Frances Munoz. She will be remembered for her perseverance in the face of adversity, excellence as a law student, attorney and judge, for her lifetime dedication to public service and children's education, and for her compassionate and gracious spirit.