

and protecting American interests. We are a free nation because of our brave. It always has been a favorite moment for me to nominate qualified young men and women to attend our military academies. General Emery Upton was in the West Point class with George Custer and later served as Commandant. His statue is on Little Round Top in Gettysburg. And my 98-year-old dad served in World War II, including the Battle of the Bulge.

Senate Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL called the enactment of 21st Century Cures the most important legislative achievement in that Congress when President Obama signed it into law in December 2016. I led a 3-year effort as chair of the Energy & Commerce Committee to pass this legislation, which expedites the FDA approvals of drugs and devices and was coupled with \$45 billion in additional health research funding. We literally held dozens of round table discussions, hearings, meetings with disease groups, the FDA, National Institutes of Health (NIH), pharmaceutical companies, and research institutions like the University of Michigan, MD Anderson, Mayo Clinic, Harvard, and the Milken Institute. Fast forward 4 years to COVID. Pfizer's CEO told his folks that they would spend "whatever it takes" to find a vaccine and thankfully were successful. Cures allowed them to produce the vaccine prior to the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) and be able to deliver it across the country the very next day after receiving the EUA in December of 2020. This was probably 6–8 months earlier than would have happened without our legislation, saving hundreds of thousands American lives. Then-Vice President Joe Biden played a pivotal hands-on role, and we included the \$1 billion Beau Biden Cancer Moonshot initiative as part of this bill. One of our great sources was Nobel Prize winner immunologist Jim Allison whose breakthroughs have been the answer to thousands.

The terrible events of January 6 continue to dominate the news nearly two years later, including this week's release of the final committee report. That morning, I walked through the House floor back to my Rayburn office where I watched many of the protesters parading under my balcony to the White House grounds. I then watched the President's speech to the crowd on TV before they came back to the Capitol and certainly attempted to violently disrupt the counting of the electoral votes cast by each state. I saw the gallows on the Capitol lawn intended for Mike Pence, and thanked some of the SWAT team members laying exhausted in the Rotunda. Chilling. Michigan was one of the 4 states that was going to be challenged despite the 154,000-vote difference. To date, there is still no credible evidence that our vote was fraudulent. I voted absentee in that election, as I did this last November 8, and I am confident that our system works. Under the law established in the 1800s, it only takes 1 Member from the House and Senate to force the full House and Senate to reconsider. This week the House and Senate adopted a legislative change requiring a minimum of 20 percent of each body to challenge a states' certified count. In my estimation we avoided a massacre of my colleagues on the House floor by only 10–15 minutes. Trump's later statement that he did everything "totally appropriate" was a key factor for my impeachment vote a week later and my support for a bipartisan January 6 con-

gressional commission. In my view, the commission's unanimous support for their report issued this week prevented the facts from being swept under the rug and helped ensure preservation of the peaceful transfer of presidential power.

More than a 1,000 folks provided testimony to get the truth that otherwise never would have been told. Where were these same souls who knew the intimate story when we debated impeachment? Crickets.

One regret I will share was the failure of the Super Committee a dozen years ago to deal with the deficit. It had 6 members of the House and Senate: 6 Republicans and 6 Democrats. The rule was that we had to get 7 votes, and we could never get more than 6 as it turned out. We spent a couple months negotiating different alternatives but could never quite get there. I was one of the "aye" votes with fellow Michigan colleague and Chair of the House Ways & Means Committee Dave Camp, but we were 1 vote short. The looming budget deficit remains a threat that most certainly future leaders must address.

My last 2 days in Congress were action packed. On Wednesday evening, I attended a joint session of Congress in which we heard from the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Earlier this year, I had a chance to listen as Zelenskyy addressed the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus by Zoom. It was encouraging to now see him in person as he makes the compelling case for Ukraine directly to the American people and their representatives. I have had the opportunity during my career to watch presidential national addresses and world leaders speak to the Congress such as Nelson Mandela, Queen Elizabeth, the Pope, and others from around the globe. I was especially proud to listen to President Zelenskyy on one of my very last days serving in the U.S. Congress.

The House and Senate cleared a \$1.7 trillion omnibus spending bill to keep the government open and funded through the 2023 fiscal year. I voted for the package, funding a number of priorities, including a 10-percent increase in defense spending to \$858 billion. The bill also includes \$1.5 billion for the Advanced Research Projects Agency, that like its defense counterpart, will fund cutting-edge research that has the potential to save millions of lives. This is the next step for 21st Century Cures. The bill also includes \$45 billion to help Ukraine defend its freedom and citizens against Russia's brutal invasion, including barbaric attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

I supported Congress acting this year because it avoids the risk of a government shut-down to start the New Year, given the narrow majorities in the House and Senate. A shut-down would threaten America's security and cause disruption to vital domestic programs, including those that help improve health outcomes in our nation. It clears the deck for the next Congress to start fresh on FY '24 rather than mop up unfinished business 4 months into FY '23.

On a closing note, I leave you with the words of a brave young woman:

"How wonderful is it that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."—Anne Frank

RECOGNIZING THE 2022 LORDS AND LADIES OF FAIRFAX

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 23, 2022

Mr. CONNOLLY. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize a dedicated group of men and women in Northern Virginia, the Lords and Ladies of Fairfax.

Every year, each member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors selects two people from his or her district who have demonstrated outstanding volunteer service, heroism, or other exceptional commitments and contributions to our community. Since the program's inception in 1984, approximately 720 individuals have earned the honor of being named a Lord or Lady Fairfax by his or her representative on the Board of Supervisors.

This year, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will recognize those individuals who have made tremendous impacts through their support of our public schools, parks, youth sports leagues, arts community, public safety, and human service programs. It is nearly impossible to fully describe the diversity of accomplishments of the honorees. Their efforts contribute greatly to the quality of life for the residents of Fairfax County and are worthy of our praise and sincere appreciation.

It is my honor to include in the RECORD the names of the 2022 Lords and Ladies Fairfax:

At-Large: Lady Nelfred Tilly Blanding and Lord Robert Pizzano, Jr.

Braddock District: Lady Diane Hoffman and Lord Jim Hickey

Dranesville District: Lady Lisa Merkel and Lord Steven Bloom

Hunter Mill District: Lady Raba Alwan Letteri and Lord Kurt Rose

Franconia District: Lady Juana Cruz and Lord Edward D. Joseph

Mason District: Lady Honorable Penney Azcarate and Lord Eduardo "Eddy" Azcarate

Mount Vernon District: Lady Maria Severa Pangelinan and Lord Jeff Gauger

Providence District: Lady Robbie Snow and Lord Rafael L. Marin

Springfield District: Lady Caroline Sieber and Lord Sam Gray

Sully District: Lady Malini Puli and Lord Sekhar Puli

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in commending and expressing our gratitude to these men and women who volunteer their time and energy on behalf of our community. Their efforts, which are deserving of our highest praise, provide immeasurable benefits to their fellow residents and serve as a reminder of why Fairfax County remains such a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

RECOGNIZING NICOLE DAMASCO FOR HER DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE

HON. JERRY MCNERNEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 23, 2022

Mr. MCNERNEY. Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing my Chief of Staff, Nicole Damasco, for her outstanding commitment and dedication to serving California's 9th Congressional District, the former

11th Congressional District of California, the great state of California, and our country. Nicole is one of the most exceptional staff members, leaders, and public servants that I have had the pleasure of working with, and it has been an honor to have had her leading my staff for the past 16 years during my time in Congress.

Nicole was born in Las Vegas, Nevada, and grew up wanting to make positive change in her country and the world. Her father and stepmother, Jude and Julia Damasco, instilled in her a strong work ethic and the importance of serving the community and those in need, and she credits her grandmother, Maria Damasco, for being an inspiration in her life and always being there for her. Throughout high school, she spent time registering voters in San Francisco and the Bay Area and volunteering for the San Francisco Democratic Party. Although she is a talented artist and studied architecture in Italy during college, she felt the best way to make a difference in her community was to pursue a career in public service. She transferred to University of California, Santa Cruz to pursue a degree in Politics. While there, she interned for the Santa Cruz County Women's Commission for 2 years and participated in the University of California, Washington DC (UCDC) program, interning in Senator Barbara Boxer's Washington, DC office.

After graduating from University of California, Santa Cruz in 2002, Nicole was hired as a Constituent Representative in Senator Barbara Boxer's office in San Francisco. She proved to be a skilled and dedicated employee and was soon promoted to Assistant to the Director of Constituent Services. In 2004, she became a Legislative Correspondent in Senator Boxer's Los Angeles office and was part of a team that changed how legislative correspondence was handled by transitioning to a centralized, digitized, state-based constituent correspondence system. It was an innovative approach that allowed the Senator to quickly receive and send constituent responses. Nicole did not know it at the time, but her team helped lay the groundwork for how state and district-based constituent correspondence is now handled in many congressional offices.

In 2006, Nicole returned to the Bay Area and continued to work in Senator Boxer's San Francisco office. During that time, she volunteered for my Congressional campaign because she felt that I could truly help improve the lives of people in our community. Thanks to the hard work by many excellent staff and volunteers like Nicole, I was elected to Congress that same year, and I asked Nicole to join my team as my Director of Constituent Services and Field Representative. Nicole went to work right away, laying the foundation for and building my casework, field outreach, and constituent services programs from the ground up. She made it her mission to make sure that everyone who reached out to my office for assistance would receive the best service possible. She ensured that quality constituent service was engrained in the culture of my office. Thanks in large part to her tireless efforts, I am proud to say that my office has helped many thousands of individuals over the years.

It was clear that Nicole was a natural leader when I hired her, and I promoted her to District Director in less than a year of her being on my staff. She took over, leading my entire

District team at a time when people in the country and my district were hurting the most. During the subprime mortgage crisis in 2008, people were losing their jobs, homes, and lifesavings. Continuing to lead with a constituent-focused approach to her work, Nicole put together a team that would be laser focused on serving the people of California's 11th and 9th Congressional Districts throughout those difficult times. She immediately acted to help organize the first-of-its-kind housing and mortgage assistance events in the country with the purpose of keeping people in their homes. She also helped organize job fairs and events that connected thousands of people with jobs, and made sure struggling veterans and seniors were informed of and received the services available to them. I know without a doubt that because of Nicole's perseverance and tenacity, we made an impact on many people and were there for them during some of the darkest periods of their lives.

Nicole stood tall and helped lead my team, all while facing great adversity herself. At the beginning of her career with my office, she provided care for her half-sister, Jessica, who ended up tragically taking her life in 2009. Nicole's stepfather and grandfather had also taken their lives shortly before, all of which took a toll on her mother and made it clear that Nicole needed to step up and help care for her other half-sister, Alaina. Throughout all this tragedy, Nicole kept a brave face, continuing to work hard and lead my office while also becoming Alaina's legal guardian and providing a stable home for her sister. Unfortunately, Nicole's mother also ended up taking her life, but thanks in part to Nicole's support, her sister has thrived, graduating from high school and with highest honors from University of California, Berkeley, studying and traveling around the world, and starting a successful career of her own. Nicole is very proud of her sister's accomplishments and is grateful for the special bond they share.

After serving as my District Director during some of the greatest challenges in our nation's history and following some very hard-fought campaigns, I asked Nicole to move across the country and become my Chief of Staff. She didn't hesitate and since 2013, she has led my team as Chief of Staff with great dedication and conviction. Due largely to Nicole's efforts, my office has had one of the highest retention rates and one of the most diverse staffs in Congress. Throughout her time as Chief of Staff, she has greatly contributed to my success in Congress, helping move forward my legislative priorities and those of my district.

As a strong leader and with her creative, out-of-the-box thinking, Nicole empowered and motivated my staff to take every opportunity to serve my district and lead on important issues that make a difference in people's lives. This was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, at which time Nicole immediately transitioned my staff to remote work and successfully kept my office operating at full capacity to continue serving our constituents and bring them the most up-to-date information without knowing what the days, weeks, and months ahead had in store.

Throughout my time in office, Nicole has helped pave the way for my major accomplishments, from the long-awaited construction of a veterans' clinic in French Camp, to helping improve our water, technology, energy, and envi-

ronmental policy. Nicole made sure that my constituents and my district always came first and that bringing services and resources to our community always remained the priority.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that Nicole's dedication to serving others not only extends to humans but to animals, too. Over the years, she has opened her home to over 15 animals—including rabbits, cats, dogs, a hamster, and even an iguana. Nicole has also personally rescued over 25 stray and injured animals from the streets of my district. She took them in, rehabilitated, and rehomed them, and with the invaluable and generous help of Harvest Home Animal Sanctuary in Stockton, ensured that the animals that crossed her path found good, loving homes. Her heart knows no bounds, and she continuously demonstrates the true meaning of selflessness.

Nicole's colleagues describe her as compassionate, understanding, and always there for them when they need her, no matter how big or small the issue. She does everything possible to see that staff have the tools and support they need to see the job through. Beyond being a boss and supervisor, Nicole is a friend and mentor to many and is there for the team when they need advice and support.

Nicole Damasco is an outstanding employee, boss, colleague, friend, mentor, and leader. Her commitment, focus, kindness, and compassion are unrivaled. She has dedicated over 20 years of her life to public service and is the embodiment of what a public servant should be. Throughout my career in Congress, she has supported me and my team and has made a lasting impact on the lives of my constituents. With great appreciation and admiration for her, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Nicole Damasco for her distinguished and invaluable service.

HONORING MR. BILLY JOHNSON

HON. DAVID ROUZER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 23, 2022

Mr. ROUZER. Madam Speaker, I rise in recognition of William (Billy) Harrison Johnson who was recently named Distinguished Alumnus of the Year by North Carolina State University College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS). Billy earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from NC State in 1986, and in recent years he has served on the NC State School of Public and International Affairs Advisory Board as well as the CHASS Dean's Board. These roles provide him with the opportunity to assist both students and alumni with educational and career-related opportunities in Washington, D.C.

Billy received this prestigious award at the annual Evening of the Stars, which honors those alumni whose success increases the value of an NC State degree and add to North Carolina State University's growing legacy of excellence, impact, and service. As a proud alumnus myself, I salute Billy for his hard earned achievements and commend his efforts to assist NC State's next generation of leaders.

As the chief lobbyist for the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI), Billy serves as a leading voice on Capitol Hill for both small and commercial businesses in the recycling field. Long a champion of the recycled