

Since its inception in 1962, the Tulare-Kings Police Academy has been a vital part of training our future law enforcement officers in the Central Valley. The program initially began its operations out of the Tulare County Sheriff's Office and trained future recruits there for over a decade.

In 1973, the program moved to the College of the Sequoias campus in Visalia, providing even more access to young students looking to enter a career of public service. The program spent nearly forty years at the Visalia campus, with dozens of students graduating each year eager to begin protecting and serving the Central Valley. In 2010, the program made its most recent move into a state-of-the-art facility on the Hanford College of the Sequoias campus.

After sixty years of operation, the Tulare-Kings Police Academy has produced over 150 graduating classes from its programs across three different campuses. These men and women have gone on to protect our communities throughout the Valley. Their service has been a consistent display of duty, honor, and commitment to their communities—all traits instilled into them by the Tulare-Kings Police Academy.

I ask my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives to join me in celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Tulare-Kings Police Academy at the College of the Sequoias.

INTRODUCTION OF THE VETERANS EQUAL ACCESS ACT

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2022

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, today I introduced the Veterans Equal Access Act. This legislation would provide equal access to state-legal medical marijuana for veterans participating in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care by ending the harmful VA prohibition on doctors and healthcare providers giving opinions or recommendations on or completing forms for state-legal medical marijuana programs.

The cannabis laws in this country are broken, including our laws that govern veterans' access to medical cannabis. Many veterans report using cannabis for medical purposes as a substitute for prescription drugs. The VA National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has acknowledged that veterans use cannabis to relieve symptoms of PTSD, and that in many states, PTSD is a qualifying condition for enrollment in medical cannabis programs.

Most states with state-legal medical cannabis programs require some sort of recommendation or approval from a medical provider for patients to enroll in the program. However, VA policy prevents VA physicians and care providers from any participation, including helping with the required paperwork or forms.

This forces veterans to seek care outside of the VA system to receive medical cannabis recommendations, which can interrupt continuity of care, lead to mistakes or gaps in care, and require veterans to pay out of pocket for addition physician visits. VA physicians

should not be denied the ability to offer a recommendation that they think may meet the needs of their patients.

Veterans should not be forced outside the VA system to seek treatment that is legal in their state.

The Veterans Equal Access Act would allow VA doctors and healthcare providers to give their opinions or recommendations on medical cannabis and to complete forms in compliance with state-legal medical marijuana programs.

I look forward to working with my co-lead, Representative BRIAN MAST, and my colleagues in the House and Senate to enact this legislation and provide equal access to state-legal medical cannabis for our veterans participating in VA health care.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL SCLERODERMA AWARENESS DAY

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2022

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor the estimated 300,000 Americans living with Scleroderma, an autoimmune disease for which there is currently no cure, and we are unsure of its cause. The actions of individuals like Amy Gietzen and organizations such as the National Scleroderma Foundation have helped—and will continue to help—the community of individuals affected by Scleroderma spread awareness about this disease and work to advance research on a cure.

Scleroderma is an autoimmune disease that affects connective tissue and the vascular system through the excess production of collagen. A localized version of the disease can cause thickening and scarring of connective tissue, or fibrosis, in small areas of the skin. Scleroderma can also be systemic and result in fibrosis in the internal organs. Scleroderma can affect almost anyone and results in issues with the skin, muscles, joints, blood vessels, and in some cases, the heart, lungs, and esophagus. The disease is progressive, presents differently in every individual, and, in many cases, can be terminal.

Amy Gietzen, born and raised in Buffalo, NY, was diagnosed with Scleroderma when she was just 19 years old and has been living with the diagnosis ever since. Today, Ms. Gietzen is on the Board of Directors for the Buffalo chapter of the National Scleroderma Foundation, and she serves as the Chair of the Patient Education and Support Committee.

In addition to her involvement with the National Scleroderma Foundation, Ms. Gietzen is a columnist for the online publication Scleroderma News. She also travels across the country to speak publicly about her experiences with Scleroderma and her personal medical journey. In her quest to raise awareness for the disease, Ms. Gietzen has made it a priority to share her personal story and support others who receive a Scleroderma diagnosis.

Organizations like the National Scleroderma Foundation are similarly working to support those living with the disease. The National Scleroderma Foundation was founded in 1998 to “advance medical research, promote disease awareness, and provide support and education to people with scleroderma, their

families, and support networks.” The Foundation provides resources including research updates and support groups. The National Scleroderma Foundation is focused on building a sense of community and solidarity for those living with Scleroderma.

I am proud to join the National Scleroderma Foundation in recognizing June 2022 as National Scleroderma Awareness Month and celebrating National Scleroderma Awareness Day on June 29, 2022. Throughout this month, the National Scleroderma Foundation is promoting the “#tealforscleroderma” campaign. To show support for those living with Scleroderma and raise awareness about the disease, on June 29th, lights on the Peace Bridge, Niagara Falls, and The Electric Building in Buffalo will turn teal.

It is due to the efforts of individuals like Ms. Amy Gietzen that I speak on this matter today. I thank Ms. Gietzen for her perseverance in the face of this disease and her tireless work advocating for scientific advancements, and I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the courageous work of Ms. Amy Gietzen and the National Scleroderma Foundation and go #tealforscleroderma.

RECOGNIZING DR. SHETAL SHAH, MD, FAAP

HON. THOMAS R. SUOZZI

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2022

Mr. SUOZZI. Madam Speaker, as I near the end of my Congressional public service, I rise today to recognize my constituent Dr. Shetal Shah, MD, FAAP of Syosset, New York for his sustained and expert advocacy in support of children's health. During my tenure representing New York's third Congressional District, Dr. Shah has been an indispensable resource to my office—and the entire Long Island Congressional Delegation, on issues related to children.

As former Legislative Chairman of the Long Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and an expert in the intricacies of children's health insurance, Dr. Shah worked with my office to staunchly defend the gains in children's health insurance coverage made as a result of passage of the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. His vigorous advocacy, in partnership with several national medical organizations, assisted our office and other members of New York State's Congressional Delegation in preserving core provisions of this landmark legislation, including the expansion of Medicaid and pediatric-specific tenets of the essential health care benefits package.

He has also worked to ensure reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program, which in New York insures almost 750,000 of our state's children. Dr. Shah has been a vocal supporter of the need to reauthorize this program since its inception and worked with myself and fellow members of Congress to reauthorize this incredibly successful program again in 2018, safeguarding health coverage and access for all children covered by Child Health Plus.

A national pediatric leader in advocacy and child health policy. He has articulated the importance of providing robust federal funding

for major programs which impact children across Long Island and the nation. These include the Children's Hospital Graduate Medical Education program, the PREEMIE Act, and the Emergency Medical Services for Children Act. His work has been a supporter of legislation to increase access to pediatric subspecialty care and provide loan repayment to pediatric subspecialty physicians who care for patients from medically underserved areas in those branches of medicine.

Through lectures and scholarly articles in the medical literature, Dr. Shah also outlined the need to modernize the Vaccines for Children Program, advocating for legislation that would create incentives for more physicians to participate and provide routine childhood immunizations. This work closely aligned with his work to increase Medicaid payments to those of Medicare, creating more equity for children throughout our federal healthcare system.

Throughout the COVID pandemic, Dr. Shah had served as a leader in the state on the pediatric implications of the pandemic. At the pandemic's onset, Dr. Shah—now serving as President of New York Chapter 2 of the American Academy of Pediatrics, helped support pediatric immunization efforts by allaying fears about COVID vaccines, combatted the omnipresent vaccine misinformation that appeared across social media, reinforced the importance of wearing a facemask to prevent virus transmission, provided timely updates on changes to COVID protocols to over 1500 pediatricians across Long Island. Though fighting the pandemic as frontline physician, Dr. Shah hand-delivered over 10,000 pieces of personal protective equipment to pediatricians across Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk counties. At a time when these resources were extremely scarce, these deliveries helped over 200 physicians across New York City and Long Island. In several cases, these deliveries allowed pediatric offices to stay open, so they could continue to care for children with chronic medical issues throughout the early months of the pandemic. Upon creation of the Paycheck Protection Program, he assisted practices representing over 100 physicians in applying, often working in their backyards so they could navigate the process of securing financial assistance and forestall layoffs or furloughs of office staff.

I was extremely proud to partner with Dr. Shah, who noticed that an initial draft of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, did not provide for payment of telehealth services for certain Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and high deductible health plans. As these plans cover a large proportion of my constituents across New York State, my office served as an agent for New Yorkers, working to certify they could use telehealth to access healthcare during the stay-at-home period of 2020.

We should take special note that all of this work is done as a volunteer, and independent of Dr. Shah's work as a specialist in neonatal-perinatal medicine, providing care for the most critically-ill and premature infants in our state at a Regional Perinatal Center, New York's highest designation for a neonatal intensive care unit. This work, made harder by the challenges of the pandemic, is among the most emotionally and physically demanding specialties in medicine, and we are fortunate that we have dedicated newborn specialists like Dr. Shah caring for our most fragile New Yorkers.

For this work with my office, his leadership, dedication and service to the members and children of the Long Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the chapter received the coveted 2020 Outstanding Chapter Award during his presidency, their first such award in over 57 years.

Madam Speaker, as I prepare to leave Congress, I wish to thank constituents like Dr. Shah for volunteering his time, passion and energy to provide advice on children's health issues. He serves as an example of how strong partnerships between engaged representatives and local experts in their districts can achieve better health for children. He has been among my most trusted advisors over the past 6 years on Medicaid, vaccinations and all aspects of child health policy. I take this opportunity to congratulate him, and the Long Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics for their dutiful work on behalf of our children.

RECOGNIZING DR. PETER
PETTINATO, VMD, ON BEING
NAMED THE UNICO NATIONAL
PRESIDENT

HON. MATT CARTWRIGHT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2022

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Madam Speaker, today I honor Dr. Peter Pettinato, VMD, who will be named the UNICO National President at the group's annual convention in New Orleans, Louisiana. Founded in 1922, UNICO is the largest Italian American service organization in the United States.

Peter was born in Carbondale Pennsylvania in 1962. He graduated from Carbondale Area Junior-Senior High School in 1980 as the valedictorian of his class. He continued his academic career at the Pennsylvania State University, University Park where he studied animal bioscience and chemistry. In May 1984, he graduated from Penn State with his Bachelor of Science degree and went on to attend graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania. He graduated with his Veterinariae Medicinae Doctoris in 1989.

After receiving his VMD, he returned to Northeastern Pennsylvania and began working at the Carbondale Veterinary Hospital as a staff veterinarian. In July 1996, he joined Johnson Technical Institute as an instructor of veterinary technology and the staff veterinarian. Seeking to return to private practice, Peter opened his own clinic, French Hill Veterinary Clinic, in Greenfield Township in 1999, and he continues to own and operate the practice.

In 1989, Peter joined the Carbondale Chapter of UNICO, and over the past three decades, he has dedicated himself to the organization and truly embodied the motto of service above self. He was elected the president of Carbondale UNICO in 1996, and he has served as the secretary since July 2000. He has served as the governor of Pennsylvania District II twice. Additionally, he spent eight years as the secretary for the eastern region. He was elected 2nd vice president in 2018, 1st vice president in 2019, and executive vice president in 2021. He has also been both a trustee and secretary of the UNICO foundation.

Peter has dedicated his life to the service of others and is actively involved in his community in addition to his work with UNICO. He is a past president of the Northeastern PA Veterinary Medical Association and past president of the Board of Trustees of the Carbondale Public Library. He also participates in bringing theatrical productions to life in the region. He has served as president of both the Area Community Theater and the Coal Company Theater. He is the founder and president of the Royal Mutineers: A Fairly Talented Theater Company, and he is a member of the Ritz Company Players.

I am honored to congratulate Peter as he takes on this leadership role with UNICO National. May he have a successful and fulfilling tenure as president during which I know he will lead with intention and integrity.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DEFENSE ACCESS ROADS IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. JOHN GARAMENDI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 23, 2022

Mr. GARAMENDI. Madam Speaker, today I introduce the "Defense Access Roads Improvement Act," which would make commonsense reforms to reduce congestion outside military installations. The Defense Access Roads program is a unique partnership between the U.S. Departments of Defense and Transportation. Under the program, the Secretary of Defense designates civilian roadways that provide critical access for domestic military installations as Defense Access Roads, making them eligible for military construction funding transferred to the Department of Transportation for road improvements off base.

Military installations anchor communities across the nation, including California's Travis and Beale Air Force Bases in my Congressional district. The Defense Access Road Program ensures that the Department of Defense pays its fair share for maintenance, upkeep, or upgrades of roads impacted by military traffic and the constant movement of heavy equipment and vehicles.

My "Defense Access Roads Improvement Act" would create a new, public process for state, county, or municipal governments to petition the Department of Defense to designate new Defense Access Roads, unlocking military construction funding for needed roadway improvements off base. My bill would establish a new online database for designated Defense Access Roads and any federal funding requests outstanding, which improves public transparency and holds the Pentagon accountable. Lastly, my bill would also allow roads leading to commercial shipyards used by the U.S. Navy or Coast Guard to be designated as Defense Access Roads under the program, instead of just seaports as under current law.

As chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee, which oversees all U.S. military installations and the Defense Access Road Program, I am committed to securing additional federal investment in off-base infrastructure. As a senior member of both the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I plan to make