

wildfire in New Mexico's history. It forced thousands of New Mexicans to evacuate and burned hundreds of homes and structures. Make no mistake, the negligence of the U.S. Forest Service caused this fire, and the federal government bears responsibility for the cost and the damage. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their support of my legislation to fully compensate affected residents and businesses, which passed through the House last week.

After the fire ignited, hurricane-force winds and an historic drought enabled the wildfire to strengthen and spread dangerously quickly. It destroyed places where I, and so many others like me, grew up and explored; places where we gathered wood and tended to our acequias; places where we buried loved ones and practiced our faith; places where we raised our children; places where we hunted and fished; and places of cherished memories. Yet, my hometown of Las Vegas and the communities in Mora and San Miguel counties, and our other dear neighbors continue to persevere despite devastating destruction. Hispano, together with Indigenous and Anglo families, have been stewards and conservationists of these lands for centuries, and they will not give up on their lands now.

There is one common thread among the countless people I've talked to and their stories of loss and heartache: resiliency. Residents bravely defended their land, honoring shared ancestors. Families and neighbors from across the community opened their doors to one another in a beautiful, shared sense of New Mexico community. Firefighters and first responders risked their lives to save others. We honor their sacrifice along with those who donated their time, resources, and money to help those forced from their homes.

Our land, water, culture, and communities will endure despite the catastrophic wildfires and ongoing floods. Our faith in each other remains unbroken. Our traditions remain unbroken. We remain unbroken.

I draw strength and determination from our shared commitment to protect the natural, cultural, and recreational resources that make these areas so beautiful. We will Rise from the Ashes and, as we have done for generations, continue to fight for what we love.

HONORING VITA SWARERS

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor Vita Swarers on the occasion of her birthday, July 24th. Vita serves as the Deputy Director of Casework and the Deputy District Director in my Conroe district office, and she has spent the past 15 years serving the people of the Eighth Congressional District of Texas.

Vita started working for me as a caseworker in January of 2008 when my district office was originally in Orange, Texas. Vita has always been a devoted member of my team and I have experienced the depth of her commitment firsthand. Following the last redistricting of Texas in 2010, Vita chose to relocate her home from Orange to Huntsville in order to continue her work in my new district office.

When Hurricane Ike struck the 8th District, Vita's own home was flooded but she helped countless victims' recover first. Thousands of Texans' lives have been improved because of Vita's tireless efforts on behalf of the community.

In addition to her amazing casework success, Vita also directs our Military Service Academy Program which, because of the academic and athletic accomplishments of our prospective cadets, typically sends 15 or more cadets to the four service academies. The staff of the academy admission offices refer to the program Vita spearheads as a "model program" and Vita frequently consults with new Congressional offices on how to set up and run a successful program.

Outside of the office, Vita is a natural caregiver, loves serving others, and gives her all in every aspect of her life. Vita is the type of person who can overcome anything—when life gives her lemons, she throws them right back—very hard. Vita is a devoted mother to three, grandmother to seven, and great-grandmother to four. She loves her family deeply and says that one of her goals in life is to live long enough to meet her greatgreat-grandchildren.

One of Vita's favorite ways to spend time with her family is to compete in local competitions. Vita is a well-decorated Texas champion—holding first place trophies throughout Texas for her famous chili.

On behalf of the Eighth Congressional District of Texas, it is a pleasure to formally recognize Vita for her long years of dedicated service and the instrumental role she has played on behalf of the constituents of the 8th District of Texas. It is an honor to work with someone as special as Vita, and I am grateful for her service. I thank Vita for everything, and wish her a Happy Birthday.

HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF CORPORAL FOYD MOCKBIL

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Mrs. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Corporal Foyd Mockbil of Howell, Michigan on the occasion of his retirement from Dearborn Police Department. His 25 years of service to the Dearborn community are worthy of commendation.

A graduate of Fordson High School, Corporal Mockbil was the first Yemeni American hired at the Dearborn Police Department, joining the team in 1997. Throughout his career, he has held various positions in the department including in Patrol Operations, Field Training, and on the SWAT Team as an operator. Additionally, he has served as an Honor Guard Member, School Resource Officer and as a plainclothes officer. At the time of his retirement, he was serving as Senior Officer of the Patrol Division on the night shift.

From the halls of Dearborn's elementary schools to events throughout the community, Corporal Mockbil is a familiar face to generations of Dearborn residents. Known for his bravery, professionalism, and compassion, he was active in the ACCESS substance abuse program and a frequent volunteer at charity events all over Metro Detroit. A friend to all

and a mentor to his peers, Corporal Mockbil has been a great representative of the department for almost 3 decades. All who have the pleasure of knowing him can attest to his infectious energy and joy. Despite being an officer, he never misses a chance to have fun and make memories. Corporal Mockbil resides in Howell, Michigan with his wife Marcie and their daughters Elayna and Elissa.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in congratulating Corporal Foyd Mockbil for his exemplary career at the Dearborn Police Department. I join with Corporal Mockbil's family, friends, and colleagues in extending my gratitude to him for his honorable service and thank him for his role in protecting our community and the people of Dearborn for over 2 decades. We wish him the best in retirement and lots of time spent with friends and family.

HONORING RODRIGO "ROD" GARCIA

HON. JUDY CHU

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Ms. CHU. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Rodrigo "Rod" Garcia, who passed away on July 2, 2022. Rod was a respected visionary, leader, and advocate whose incredible life was defined by his dedication to empowering the Hispanic community to achieve educational excellence, economic opportunity, and social equity.

Rod Garcia was born in East Los Angeles, California in 1943. He graduated from California State University, Los Angeles with a bachelor's degree of science in engineering and also obtained an associate degree in engineering from East Los Angeles College, launching a lifelong career in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) field. Rod subsequently served as a civil engineer for the City of Los Angeles and worked for the Port of Los Angeles in Public Works, Building and Safety. Due to his expertise in the field of engineering and his leadership abilities, Rod went on to chair the City of Monterey Park's Planning Commission as well as serving on the Dean of Engineering's Advisory Board for his alma mater, California State University, Los Angeles. Rod also served as president of Century Diversified, Inc., an engineering and construction firm, for over thirty years.

Rod was one of the few Hispanic engineers amidst a tech boom in California in 1973 and despite being in the minority in the STEM field, he gathered a cohort of fellow Hispanic engineers determined to contribute and diversify the sector. That's why, in 1974, Rod founded the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) with the mission of ensuring networking and education opportunities for Hispanic students and professionals in the Southern California region. Shortly thereafter, SHPE's first collegiate chapters were established at California State University, Los Angeles, East Los Angeles College, and the University of Southern California. For five decades, Rod's high-spirited and fearless leadership propelled the SHPE to reach 13,000 memberships and 286 chapters nationwide. His unique ability to unite community partners

and leaders around the country serve as evidence that closing the STEM education gap and increasing the number of Hispanics in STEM can and will be done.

Rod will be remembered by his colleagues and thousands of current and former SHPE students and professionals for his devotion, service, mentorship, and immense contributions to expanding awareness, access, support, and development opportunities to Hispanics in STEM so that they may realize their potential and positively impact the world. His legacy of empowering the Hispanic community to achieve educational excellence, economic opportunity, and social equity will guide many members of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers for generations to come. I ask my colleagues to join me in commemorating the life of this extraordinary individual.

HONORING MR. WILLY ELLIOTT-MCCREA

HON. JIMMY PANETTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Mr. PANETTA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the retirement of Mr. Willy Elliott-McCrea from the Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County after thirty-three years of dedicated service to communities across the central coast of California. The Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County was the first food bank in California and the second in the nation—it was founded in 1972 as an emergency food pantry to distribute U.S. Department of Agriculture surplus food as a part of the Community Action Board in the City of Santa Cruz.

Mr. Elliott-McCrea began his public service career with the Second Harvest Food Bank in 1979 as the warehouse manager and driver, later taking on the responsibility of purchasing food. In that same year, he represented Second Harvest Food Bank as one of thirteen founding members of Feeding America. In 1988, Mr. Elliott-McCrea was promoted to Executive Director and later to Chief Executive Officer in 1993, the position he held until retirement. Shortly after his promotion to Executive Director, the 6.9 magnitude Loma Prieta Earthquake devastated Santa Cruz and surrounding areas in October 1989. The Food Bank became ground zero for disaster relief, with the number of people served dramatically increasing from 15,000 per month to 25,000 people per week.

Throughout his time with the Second Harvest Foodbank, Mr. Elliott-McCrea helped guide statewide policy, championing progress in food security resources. He energized the Second Harvest Board of Directors to change its mission to be more community-focused, thus pioneering a new model for food banks and inspiring emergency feeding operations nationwide. To this day, food bank distributions operate around a network of community-based food pantries in senior residential living centers, homeless service centers, schools, churches, and neighborhood resource centers.

Mr. Elliott-McCrea led Second Harvest Food Bank through natural disasters, recessions, and, most recently, the coronavirus pandemic. In 2011, Second Harvest provided an average of 6.7 million pounds of fresh fruits and vege-

tables to the Santa Cruz community, but in the first year of the pandemic, Second Harvest's operations grew to providing 16.5 million pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables. In addition to his role with Second Harvest, Mr. Elliott-McCrea also served as the founding president of the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) from 1995 to 1998 and again from 2019 to 2021. The CAFB ensures its coalition of 41-member food banks have the tools and resources to focus on feeding communities across California. The Association also provides Nutrition Education Programs that work with community volunteers to provide Nutrition Support Groups and Cooking Clubs.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in recognizing and thanking Willy Elliot-McCrea for his decades of service. His leadership and dedication to public service have shaped the food bank community not just in Santa Cruz County, but across the nation. I extend my personal appreciation to Mr. Willy Elliott-McCrea and his dedication to the central coast of California.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2023

SPEECH OF

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 19, 2022

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Chair, I want to commend the members of the House Committee on Appropriations, specifically the members of the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veteran Affairs, and Related Agencies Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations bill for including robust funding for Major Projects Construction.

This funding for the construction, alteration, extension, and improvement of any facilities within the jurisdiction or use of the Department of Veteran Affairs will help all VA hospitals expand access to health care to veterans. For example, the Lake Nona VA Medical Center located in my district has grown substantially since established in 2006. The Lake Nona VA Medical Center serves more than 110,000 veterans in Central Florida and includes a 120-bed Community Living Center, two Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs/Domiciliaries, located at both Lake Nona Campus and the Lake Baldwin Campus, one Health Care Center in Viera, two large multi-specialty Satellite Outpatient Clinics in Orlando and Daytona Beach, and four Community-Based Outpatient Clinics located in Clermont, Kissimmee, Orange City, and Tavares.

A facility expansion of the Lake Nona VA Medical Center would add at least additional twenty beds for inpatient mental health care and three additional floors for intensive and surgical rehabilitation. I am proud of the healthcare provided by Lake Nona VA Medical Center to veterans in the Central Florida. I believe Congress should continue to provide the resources necessary to allow for expansion and improvement of facilities under the jurisdiction of the Department of Veteran Affairs and I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to support this goal.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BRIAN BABIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Mr. BABIN. Madam Speaker, I voted 'no' but it was not recorded (card apparently not read).

Had I been present, I would have voted NAY on Roll Call No. 373.

HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF SERGEANT TIM STACY

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Mrs. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Sergeant Tim Stacy of the Dearborn Police Department on the occasion of his retirement. His honorable 22 years of service to our community is worthy of commendation.

A graduate of Southgate Anderson High School, Schoolcraft College, and Wayne County Community College Sergeant Stacy began his career in the Dearborn Police Department in 1994 as a reserve police officer. After obtaining his criminal justice degree in 1996; he was promoted to the role of Police Ordinance Officer in 1997. From there, he worked his way up the ranks becoming certified in traffic safety and accident investigations and was promoted to the position of Sergeant and Office in Charge of the Police Motor Carrier and Ordinance Enforcement Units in 2015.

Known for his caring heart and willingness to help those in need, Sergeant Stacy has always looked for new ways to advance professionally and better serve his community. He has frequently attended trainings at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. In addition to his duties as an officer, he served as a community liaison for the department, helping improve the lives of his neighbors each day. A dedicated officer and known for his commitment to improving his community, he was awarded the Chiefs Outstanding Service Award in 2018. He has always been there to help anyone who needed a helping hand. He continues to reside in Lincoln Park, Michigan with his wife Maya and is an outstanding father to their children Ava, Emma, and Lily.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Sergeant Tim Stacy for a career of exemplary service to the Dearborn Police Department. I join with Sergeant Stacy's family, friends, and colleagues in extending my gratitude to him for his decades of honorable service. We thank him for serving the people of the City of Dearborn for the past 22 years. We wish him the best in retirement and lots of time spent with friends and family as he fights cancer. He is a man of honor and bravery—Cancer has never had a more formidable opponent.