

as CSUN, for her decades of public service as an advocate for education in the San Fernando Valley, throughout the State of California, and across the country.

I think of a quote from Saint Francis of Assisi: "Start by doing what is necessary; and then do what is possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible." That is Irene Tovar.

Irene's story begins like many of ours: in search of the American Dream. Her mother is from Salamanca, Guanajuato, Mexico, and her father is from Jerez, Zacatecas, Mexico. Her parents met in southern California, where later they married. They first settled in East Los Angeles, where Irene, her sister, and her brother were born, and then they moved to Pacoima and lived on Pinney Street.

Irene was a dedicated student and attended Pacoima Elementary School, San Fernando High School, and San Fernando Valley State College, which is now known as Cal State University Northridge.

While attending CSUN, Irene, who earned a bachelor's degree in social science from the university in 1969, noticed that the dropout rate for Latino students was disproportionately high, so she helped create an organization to address the issue.

It grew into the Latin American Civic Association, known as LACA, which administered the first Head Start program in the San Fernando Valley. This organization helps thousands of working families access quality childcare and education.

Alongside leaders such as Dr. Rudy Acuna, Irene began to advocate and organize for the creation of the Equal Opportunity Program and the Chicano Studies Department at California State University Northridge.

The Chicano Studies Department was established in 1969 with only 100 students. Now, it is one of the largest Chicano studies departments in the country.

Her advocacy caught the attention of then-Governor Jerry Brown, who, during his first tenure, appointed Irene to the State Personnel Board. She was the first Mexican American and first person of color to sit on the board.

She was instrumental in implementing policies and procedures that removed artificial barriers in the California civil service system, including differential pay and affirmative action. She also served as a full-time member of the California Public Employment Relations Board, a quasi-judicial body she joined in 1974.

Irene's passion for education and public service continues. She currently serves as the CEO of LACA, which now focuses on providing multifamily services and affordable housing.

Irene has played a key role in the history of the San Fernando Valley as a founding member of the L.A. Mission College, board member of the United Way, board member of the L.A. Urban Coalition, board member of the CSUN

Alumni Association, and many other organizations.

She currently serves as a commissioner on the City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission, whose mission is to promote intergroup peace-building, equity, and human rights.

Irene, your service is unparalleled, and this doctorate is a symbol of your sacrifice and hard work for the families of the San Fernando Valley, the great State of California, and our country.

Congratulations, Irene, and I am proud to call you Dr. Irene Tovar.

#### HONORING THE LIFE OF RODRIGO GARCIA

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of a trailblazer who made a difference across this country.

Rodrigo "Rod" Garcia, founder of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, otherwise known as SHPE, was a man of deep conviction and passion. Not only did he commit to his work as an engineer, but he opened a door for so many, including myself, to follow in his footsteps.

As one of the only handful of Hispanic engineers during the 1973 tech boom, he could easily have gone on to a promising career in the sciences. But when he saw a wrong, he set out to right that wrong.

In gathering a cohort of fellow Hispanic engineers, he was determined to diversify the STEM industry across our country, and that is when SHPE was born.

While Rod Garcia was an incredible man, his legacy in SHPE is equally incredible. Now, the organization has grown into the largest Hispanic STEM association nationwide, with 13,000 members and 286 chapters across the country.

An engineer to his core, Mr. Garcia attributed the success of SHPE as such: "We were engineers. We drew up the plan. . . . To see it take off the way it has, it is really special." And special it is.

SHPE's impact is only growing. In the 2021-2022 academic year, SHPE awarded scholarships to over 200 students across the country, distributing over \$1.3 million.

Rod has passed on, and he will be sorely missed, but his reputation and his memory will live on forever.

#### CONGRATULATING THE AMHERST ALL STAR DARLINGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CLINE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLINE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize an incredible achievement in youth sports. The Amherst All Star Darlings, a girls' youth softball team of 7- and 8-year-olds, just finished their season undefeated.

After winning both the district and State championships, they have set their eyes on Cochran-Bleckley, Georgia, where the girls' softball world series will be played later this month.

These young ladies worked hard and enjoyed the competition, and their determination to win throughout the length of their season has been unmatched.

Now, they are planning and working toward making their trip to Georgia possible to get the chance to make this Cinderella story a reality.

Their efforts are a story of camaraderie, hard work, and laying the foundation for a bright future not only in sports but in all of their future endeavors.

Amherst has been a special part of the Sixth District for decades, and it has been an honor to represent the people of Amherst, first in Richmond and now in Washington. The Sixth District, along with the entire Commonwealth of Virginia, will be cheering them on when they compete on July 31 in the Dixie youth softball league world series.

Congratulations to the Amherst All Star Darlings for representing friends and family, the Amherst community, and the entire Commonwealth of Virginia so well.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE IS NOT A PARTISAN ISSUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTCH) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEUTCH. Madam Speaker, over 6 years ago, our former colleague Carlos Curbelo and I launched the Climate Solutions Caucus to have a bipartisan effort to address climate change. We did it because where we live in south Florida, climate change is not a partisan issue.

Republican and Democratic leaders alike, Republican and Democratic business leaders and elected officials, all understand that sunny-day flooding, and sea-level rise brought by climate change are happening right now, and we need to respond to it.

□ 1015

So we launched action here to try to responsibly address climate change, just as so many are in South Florida and around the country. The 7 years that we have just endured are the 7 hottest years on record. In 2021, the U.S. endured over 20 weather disasters, costing a billion dollars or more. Hurricanes, and floods, and wildfires, all of them made worst by climate change.

Last year, there were at least 688 people who died in the United States attributed to climate change: \$150 billion in damage.

And so where are we now?

Well, our country and our world are reeling from the devastating impact of climate change. For the first time ever, temperatures in the U.K. exceeded 104 degrees; Ireland hit record highs of over 90 degrees; Portugal 117. More than 1,100 people in Spain and Portugal died in this heat wave.

Wildfires are scorching Europe. More than 100 million people in the U.S. have

been under a heat alert. A mega drought is gripping our West and Southwest, drying up critical sources of fresh water and addressing our demands for electrical power. And a deep drought has much of North Africa on the edge of famine.

This has happened in one week. Yet, these heat waves will become more frequent and intense for decades to come. We will continue to see the intense heat waves that have been scorching Europe and the U.S. put immense pressure on our infrastructure and continue to put lives at risk.

Madam Speaker, we need innovators and entrepreneurs in climate tech. We need young people to stand up and demand a world that will be safe for them. We need the Biden administration, and we need this Congress.

My colleagues, we need to be bold. It is not about comfort. It is not about staying cool. For people across the globe right now, at this moment, it is and continues to be about survival. It is time for us to act on climate change. The future of our planet depends on us.

#### RECOGNIZING JON DEWITTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HUIZENGA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to say thank you. Thank you to a chief of staff, a colleague, a confidante, and a special friend.

Jon DeWitte has been my chief of staff for 11½ years. In fact, when I was elected in 2010, Jon was the first call that I made. He was my first hire, and we have been on this journey together the entire time.

Now, Jon has had a great track record here in Washington, D.C., as well. He worked for the Education and Workforce Committee. He then went on to work with former Congressman Dave Camp. Then when I left the position of district director from my predecessor, Peter Hoekstra, Jon came and filled that role and filled that position for 8 years until I got elected, when I asked him to come back to Washington and act as my chief of staff.

Well, Jon—two redistrictings, majority, minority, government shutdown, impeachments, war, peace—we have seen just about all of it and have lived that textbook of political science. I couldn't have done it without him, and I know he could not have done this without his family.

I want to say a special thank you, as well, to Jodi, Nathan, Katie, and Josh for the sacrifices that they made—the sacrifices that they have made—for late nights and early mornings, for travel, for all the different things that go into being an excellent chief of staff. He has been one.

Now, I know that there are great paths ahead for Jon, and great paths ahead for all of you, but I do know that our friendship will not end. Team Huizenga is always Team Huizenga, and Jon is a vital part of that.

So once again, I thank Jon for his service, not only to me, but more importantly, to the constituents of the Second Congressional District back in Michigan and service to his country.

A job well done and I thank him.

#### HOUSING MARKET NEEDS HELP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TORRES) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. TORRES of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express concern about the building material supply change bottlenecks and elevated construction costs that continue to put a damper on the single-family housing market.

For the first time since June 2020, both single-family starts and permits fell below a 1 million annual pace. Additionally, builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes declined for the seventh straight month in July, falling 12 points to 55.

According to the National Association of Homebuilders and the Wells Fargo Housing Market Index released just this week, this marks the lowest HMI reading since May 2020 and the largest single-month drop in the history of the HMI, except during the pandemic.

Building material prices during the pandemic have hit record highs with low stock, and prospective buyers are faced with unaffordable home prices as a result. Affordable housing is a critical need in the Inland Empire, the district that I represent, and I urge the administration to prioritize the ability and the availability and price of lumber to make more homes affordable.

#### IN SUPPORT OF NAVY LIEUTENANT RIDGE ALKONIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of U.S. Navy Lieutenant Ridge Alkonis, a sailor currently stationed abroad in Japan. While the U.S. and Japanese naval forces have long maintained a strong bond, the relationship is deteriorating as a result of Japanese injustices against U.S. military members.

The case of U.S. Navy Lieutenant Ridge Alkonis, who is of American Samoan descent, exemplifies the disparate treatment American sailors receive in Japan.

While driving his wife and three children to get ice cream during a family outing, Lieutenant Alkonis suffered a sudden and unforeseen medical emergency which resulted in a tragic car accident causing the death of two Japanese citizens. While indeed a tragedy, this was an accident in every sense of the word.

At the scene of the accident, Lieutenant Alkonis was immediately arrested by Japanese authorities, without re-

ceiving any medical care, and imprisoned. He was systematically deprived of sleep, denied legal counsel, and pressured to sign false accusations.

The Tokyo High Court rejected the majority of evidence submitted by Lieutenant Alkonis, and last week, his appeal was dismissed.

I am deeply troubled by Japan's mistreatment of Lieutenant Alkonis. These abuses are hurting the U.S.-Japan alliance exactly when it needs to be strengthened.

I call on President Biden and Ambassador Rahm Emanuel to bring Lieutenant Alkonis home.

#### DEFENDING WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) for 5 minutes.

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, the United States Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* to uphold the Mississippi Gestational Age Act and overrule the Court's prior decision in *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, declaring that the constitutional right to abortion upheld for nearly half a century no longer exists, ripped away women's right to make their own reproductive healthcare decisions.

Nationwide, radical Republicans were prepared to immediately charge ahead with measures to take away the freedom of choice. In Congress, Republicans are plotting a nationwide ban to criminalize abortion, and State legislatures are advancing the extremist agenda to criminalize reproductive health decisions, including new laws to arrest doctors and punish women and those who provide aid. Far-right politicians are actively working to dismantle the legal protections afforded to women and invading their bodily autonomy rights.

For centuries, women have fought tenaciously for their fundamental human rights and we will not stop. On July 18, 1848, 174 years and 2 days ago, the first women's rights convention in the United States was held in Seneca Falls, New York. The Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 was the first platform for women to discuss their civil, social, and religious rights and challenge their inferior status. Feminist leaders and women across the country courageously voiced their collective struggles and petitioned for change.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, an ardent activist and leader, presented the "Declaration of Sentiments," demanding the same rights and freedoms that the Declaration of Independence granted to men at that time. The Seneca Falls Convention was a cornerstone of the women's suffragette movement and paved the path for women's rights movements.