

THE TUSKEGEE AIRMAN LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROBERT J. FRIEND MEMORIAL POST OFFICE BUILDING AND THE ARTURO L. IBLETO POST OFFICE BUILDING

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I rise today to support legislation that would rename local post offices in California to honor the life and legacy of two Californians.

The first bill, led by Congresswoman KATIE PORTER, would designate the Northwood Post Office in Irvine, CA, as the "Tuskegee Airman Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. Friend Memorial Post Office Building."

Lieutenant Colonel Friend was among the 355 pilots who served in the all African-American unit known as the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. During his military career, Lieutenant Colonel Friend fought in 142 combat missions and served as an operations officer for both the 301st Squadron and the 332nd Fighter Group. He received various military awards, such as the Distinguished Flying Cross, Presidential Unit Citation, and Air Medal. In 2007, he was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, along with the rest of the Tuskegee Airmen.

After retiring from military service, Lieutenant Colonel Friend worked on the development of missile systems and space station components in Irvine, CA. He continued to participate in speaking and educational engagements about his experience with the Tuskegee Airmen into his 90s.

Lieutenant Colonel Friend died in 2019 in Long Beach, CA, at the age of 99. He exemplified all that it is to be a public servant by devoting his life to his country as a member of the Tuskegee Airmen and further serving his country after his military career ended.

The second bill, led by Congressman MIKE THOMPSON, would designate the Cotati Post Office in Cotati, CA, as the "Arturo L. Ibleto Post Office Building."

Arturo L. Ibleto was an Italian-born immigrant and resistance fighter in World War II before moving to Sonoma County. It was there that he met his wife, and they built a successful Italian restaurant and catering business. For nearly 50 years, Art was an institution in the Sonoma County food and wine community, where he became known as the "Pasta King."

Additionally, Art lent considerable time and resources to local charitable, educational, and civic causes that left a lasting mark on the community. He continued working full time until his passing in 2020 at the age of 94.

It is an honor for me to be able to speak on behalf of these two bills to honor notable Californians and celebrate our rich history.

Both of these bills passed the House with overwhelming bipartisan support, including the support of all 53 Members of the California House Delegation as cosponsors. Both Senator PADILLA and I urge our colleagues to support quick passage of these bills.

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise today in recognition of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. This annual recognition offers the opportunity to celebrate the unique impact the Asian American and Pacific Islander community has made and continues to make in the United States.

On this heritage month, we reflect on the incredible achievements of this minority community and honor the unique combination of traditions and cultures that create the rich tapestry of the Asian American Pacific Islander diaspora and experience. We also use this time to educate ourselves on the nuances of the AAPI identity and better understand the challenges this community faces.

In 1977, then-Representative Frank Horton of New York introduced a resolution to designate the first 10 days in May as AAPI Heritage Week. The month of May was appropriate because of two key anniversaries that occurred in that month. On May 7, 1843, the first Japanese immigrants came to the United States.

On May 10, 1869, the first transcontinental railroad was completed, largely due to the backbreaking work of Chinese laborers, some of whom lost their lives in the construction.

Congress did not enact Representative Horton's initial resolution. The following year, however, with the persistent help of then-Representative Norman Mineta, Congress enacted a new resolution to designate the 7-day period beginning on May 4 as Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Week. In 1992, Congress authorized the entire month of May as AAPI Heritage Month, which we now celebrate.

The presence and influence of the AAPI community in the United States has been growing steadily since the 19th century. The 1870 census classified approximately 63,000 individuals as Asian. By 1960, when the census allowed respondents to select their race, that number grew to 980,000. As of 2019, there are 22.4 million AAPI individuals in America, 475,000 of whom call Maryland home.

It is important to remember that the AAPI community is not a homogenous group. It is an incredibly diverse community, made up of a wide array of cultures spanning many countries and territories, which includes over 50 ethnicities, over 100 languages, and multiple religions. Each subset draws from a unique set of traditions, and we cannot assume they have one shared, uniform experience. We know that the AAPI community makes up about 7 percent of our total population, and this rich and diverse community has an outsized impact on every pillar of our society. We cannot forget the many barriers to success this community has overcome to reach such heights, which makes this community's successes all the more impressive.

To understand the profound influence the AAPI community has, we need not

look further than Capitol Hill. This year, we mourned the passing of my good friend and former colleague, Norman Mineta. A passionate defender of justice, talented strategist, and exemplary patriot, Representative Mineta dedicated his life to service as a mayor, Congressman, and Cabinet member. In 1941, the U.S. Government interned his family along with hundreds of thousands of other Japanese Americans. Perhaps both in spite of and because of that experience, Representative Mineta pursued a career as a public servant. During his tenure as a legislator, he co-founded and chaired the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

He led the charge on the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which directed the Federal Government to issue a formal apology to and compensate the survivors of Japanese internment. He inspired generations of Asian Americans to get involved in politics. We miss him, but his legacy will live on for years to come.

As chairman of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, I am in awe of the resilience and determination we have seen from AAPI small business owners over the past 2 years. In Maryland alone, there are 13,375 AAPI-owned businesses, many of which include restaurants and eateries. In fact, if you use cuisine predominance as a barometer of cultural impact, the Asian American influence is unparalleled.

In 2021, the New York Times published a list of the 50 most exciting restaurants in the United States. Seventeen of the top 50 restaurants, or 34 percent, incorporate AAPI food or have an AAPI head chef, more than any other foreign cuisine. Through food, AAPI culture has become inextricably linked to the American identity. In my home city of Baltimore, a group of volunteers known as the China Collective organizes a pop-up market named the Charm City Market. I have watched as the event has grown in both attendance and footprint over the years, celebrating the AAPI community's diverse food and entrepreneurship landscape. Each year, I look forward to the market's ever-growing celebration and empowerment of AAPI small business owners and entrepreneurs.

Asian American Pacific Islanders also played a massive role in our COVID-19 response, oftentimes finding themselves on the front lines as essential workers. Despite facing racial bias and prejudice largely attributed to Donald Trump's deliberately inflammatory use of the term "China Virus," the AAPI community remained a steadfast lifeline for Americans in need. At Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Erika Rono, an emergency room nurse who came to the U.S. from the Philippines in 2014, continues to work every day through the harrowing realities of a hospital overrun by COVID-19 patients. Over the past 2 years, she has toiled day and night, putting her own life at risk, to save

Baltimoreans. We cannot thank her and her colleagues enough for their bravery.

Despite the vital role the AAPI community plays in the U.S., they still endure racism and discrimination. I am broken-hearted to see an unprecedented increase in hate crimes against the AAPI community in recent years. According to a study by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University in San Bernardino, there was a 44-percent increase in anti-Asian American hate crimes across 16 of the largest cities in the United States. In 2021, 81 percent of Asian Americans who participated in a report by Pew Research stated that violence against them was increasing.

One in 4 AAPI small business owners has experienced vandalism or threats to their business at least once between 2020 and 2021, and one in five Asian Americans worries daily about potential racial threats and attacks. On top of this fear of retaliation, there is also concern in the community, as with everyone else, about contracting the virus.

We must continue to do all that we can to preserve, protect, and support the AAPI community. Last year, Congress enacted and President Biden signed into law S. 937, the “COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act,” which formally condemns anti-Asian violence and creates pathways for the expedited reporting and prosecution of such abhorrent events at the Federal, State, and local levels. There is no place for hate in our society.

Today, as I think about my late, great colleague Norm Mineta and all the Asian Americans who make America what it is today, I re-emphasize my gratitude for the AAPI community and reaffirm my commitment to eliminating systemic barriers to its success.

TRIBUTE TO MICHELE MACKIN

Mr. REED. Madam President, today I wish to recognize the dedicated public service of Michele Mackin, who retired on April 30 as managing director for contracting and national security acquisitions with the Government Accountability Office.

For 34 years, Michele has helped Congress analyze the Federal Government's largest acquisition programs, from the Air Force's C-17 and C-130 aircraft to the Navy's Littoral Combat Ship, Ford-class aircraft carrier, and Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, along with scores of other systems and related services that the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security have procured to make our Nation safe.

She has also been a leading voice on Federal contracting issues and a vigilant watchdog who consistently brought important issues related to the improper use of contracts to light. In so doing, Michele has obtained the respect of the Members of this body and the deep affection of her colleagues, who for decades have been drawn to her fine example of public service.

Michele has been a trusted voice on this Nation's shipbuilding programs, and Congress has relied greatly on her clear analysis and recommendations to guide us in our oversight role. Since first becoming a member of the Senior Executive Service in 2013, Michele has testified before Congress 11 times for a variety of committees—voicing concern on the Littoral Combat Ship program, raising questions about the Navy's acquisition strategy for the Constellation-class guided-missile frigate, highlighting risks in the Coast Guard's Deepwater program, and advocating for contracting and acquisition reforms at the Departments of Navy, Homeland Security, and Veterans Affairs.

Michele epitomizes what Congress and the American public value about the Government Accountability Office: the honest broker. In embracing the idea that oversight of programs and contracts represents a sacred trust, Michele has been a tireless, effective advocate for both the American taxpayer and the men and women serving the government's many and varied missions. She has inspired her teams with the notion of stewardship that the American people should get what they have paid for, that government should operate fairly and transparently, and American warfighters should get the capabilities they need to defend this great Nation.

We wish Michele a fond farewell and thank her for her distinguished service to Congress and the American public.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING DR. ETHELDRA “THEL” SAMPSON DAVIS

• Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I rise today to bring the Senate's attention to the life and legacy of an Alaskan trailblazer, a woman of enormous heart and energy whose dedication to the young people of Anchorage, AK, was deep and made a positive difference.

Etheldra “Thel” Sampson Davis was born in Arkansas in 1931, one of eight children. After her family moved to California while she was a child, she graduated from LA City College with an associate of arts degree in 1951 and subsequently earned a bachelor's degree in education from the University of California, Los Angeles. She practiced her profession in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles for 8 years.

In 1957, Thel visited her adventurous older brothers in Anchorage, AK, and fell in love with the State. After becoming certified to teach in Alaska, she became the first African-American on-contract teacher in the Anchorage School District in 1959. As a teacher, she contributed to the future of the Anchorage community at five Anchorage elementary schools: Willow Crest, Airport Heights, Government Hill, Mountain View, and Denali. And in

1965, she earned her master's in education degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

In 1967, she became the assistant principal at Willow Crest Elementary School. And in 1969—the same year in which she married Joseph Davis—she applied for and was hired to fill the position of principal at Fairview Elementary School. This was yet another trailblazing moment for Thel, as she was the first African-American principal in Anchorage. She later became principal at the new Ptarmigan Elementary and later the John F. Kennedy Elementary School on Fort Richardson near Anchorage. Always seeking additional knowledge and skill, Thel achieved yet another goal by earning her doctorate in education from California's Newport University in 1975.

Thel taught and provided leadership for Anchorage area students and her fellow educators for 21 years until her retirement in 1980. A former superintendent of the Anchorage School District has said of Thel's service, “Etheldra had a true passion and belief that ALL students can succeed if given a rigorous academic program coupled with love and concern.” The Anchorage School Board, in reviewing the proposal to rename Fairview Elementary School in her honor, noted that her “passion and commitment to the students entrusted to her care is legendary.” No better tribute can ever be said of an educator.

But throughout her career, Thel was not only a busy teacher and principal. In addition to her school-based contributions to the Anchorage community, Thel was an active member in a variety of community and national organizations, including the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and National Education Association. She also helped to establish several youth mentoring organizations, including the NAACP Youth Council and the United League of Girls. As a member of the Black Educators Taskforce, she helped to recruit and mentor African-American teachers and administrators for Anchorage's schools.

After her retirement, Thel continued to contribute through her role as a crime prevention specialist. Her work in that area resulted in the creation of the Neighborhood Watch program in Anchorage and the Alaska Coalition to Prevent Shoplifting.

Thel continues to lift students up. Her lifelong dream came true with the creation of the Dr. Etheldra S. Davis Scholarship in 2019, which is dedicated to helping young people continue their education through whatever path is best for them, be it through the trades and apprenticeship or college.

Thel “gained her heavenly wings” at the age of 85 on November 25, 2020, due to complications from COVID-19.

In recognition of the many contributions Dr. Davis made to Anchorage's youth and the community at large over her many years of service, the Anchorage School Board recently voted to rename the first school in which she