

where she confronted and took down the Lakewood, CO mass shooter, despite sustaining injuries herself. This act of bravery earned her accolades, including the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year 2022 by the National Police Hall of Fame and the Valor Award. Her unwavering determination and resilience, even in the face of adversity, make her an inspiration.

Yvette Marquez-Sharpnack, a celebrated cookbook author and Emmy Award-winning creator and chef, blends her Texan roots into culinary masterpieces. Drawing inspiration from her grandmother's Mexican traditions and her mother's home-style dishes, she crafts delectable creations showcased on *MuyBuenoBlog.com*. Besides her blog, Yvette, based in Colorado, is a sought-after brand ambassador and recipe developer, engaging her audience on social media.

Alice Jackson is a trailblazer in the energy sector, shining as Xcel Energy's Senior Vice President of System Strategy and Chief Planning Officer. Her leadership in this male-dominated field has been transformative. With a decade of contributions, Alice has redefined the standards of excellence in executive leadership. Her success story is not just inspiring but a testament to her resilience, making her an inspiration for aspiring professionals in the industry.

From saving lives during a mass shooting to Emmy winning inspiration, this year's recipients have made a lasting impact on those around them and in our community. It is leaders like these women who will allow us to achieve a more prosperous and inclusive future and I congratulate them all on being recognized as "Women Who Soar."

TRIBUTE TO OPTUS BANK

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, I rise today to pay tribute to a distinguished South Carolina bank for its unwavering commitment to advancing minority-owned businesses. Optus Bank of Columbia, South Carolina was recently awarded the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) 2023 Robert J. Brown Minority Business Enterprise of the Year Award. Their steadfast support of businesses in distressed areas has uplifted communities and the lives of many.

To recognize the important role of entrepreneurs and institutions in advancing minority-owned businesses, the Minority Business Development Agency at the United States Department of Commerce established Minority Enterprise Development Week in 1983. Since then, the Department of Commerce has commenced numerous awards to celebrate the outstanding achievements of minority entrepreneurs. The Robert J. Brown Minority Business Enterprise Award recognizes companies that have exceeded industry standards and achieved phenomenal financial success while showing a commitment to social responsibility and strong community involvement. The award is among the highest levels of recognition that a U.S. minority business enterprise can receive from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Optus Bank was selected because of its commitment to closing the racial wealth gap,

exacerbated by systemic disparities in the financial industry. Following in the footsteps of Victory Savings Bank, the first Black-owned bank in South Carolina, Optus is committed to providing access to capital to individuals and businesses excluded from the banking system. By turning deposits from community members into loans that serve local businesses, Optus provides funding for enterprises that may not be approved for traditional loans. Their unique community driven mission has allowed them to achieve great success while helping scores of minority-owned enterprises succeed in South Carolina.

Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, I ask that you and our colleagues join me in celebrating Optus Bank and their unwavering commitment to serving communities and people in need. Their actions should serve as an example to other organizations dedicated to positively impacting the communities they operate in. South Carolina is more prosperous because of the efforts of Optus Bank and I wish them continued success.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF ROBERT H. LIPP

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, today I am honored to recognize the life of a quintessential West Side of Buffalo resident, Robert Lipp. Often referred to as "The Mayor of Fifteenth Street," Robert left an indelible mark on a community that will be mourning his loss for a long time to come.

Born in 1965, Robert graduated from Maryvale High School in Cheektowaga, and Bryant & Stratton College in Buffalo, where he obtained a degree in Electronic Technology. A longtime employee with the New York State Thruway Authority, an on-the-job accident meant that Robert entered retirement earlier than he had planned. Instead of approaching this situation with negativity, Robert began to dive into some of his passions. As a man that understood the value of community and neighborhoods, he would plant flowers each year for Buffalo's annual Garden Walk. Robert did not simply hope that someone would take steps to beautify the West Side of Buffalo; he did it. Whether it result from confrontation of absentee landlords or fixing the electrical issues of his neighbors, there was no limit to the level of love that Robert displayed for the City of Buffalo.

Of course, Robert enjoyed many other activities, as well. He loved to camp, go to concerts and weddings, and (in typical Buffalo fashion) watch his beloved Bills and Sabres. He spent time with his many dogs, sought to make each year's Garden Walk better than the last, and served as a dedicated member of the Democratic Committee.

Survived by his husband, Bobby Graber, and countless loving family members, Robert's sudden passing will undoubtedly be difficult to endure. Nevertheless, to all of those who knew and loved Robert, his legacy will remain. Robert served as a model citizen in so many ways, and our community will forever be a better place because of him.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF MRS. CINDY CASTELLO

HON. BARRY LOUDERMILK

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, I rise today to recognize Mrs. Cindy Castello for the vital role she has played in the development of Cherokee County, Georgia as a stronghold of conservative values.

Cindy and her husband, Pete, have been friends of my family for many years. We have witnessed her character and dedication to our shared cause in all of her numerous roles as a community servant. As a dedicated leader, Cindy has been instrumental in recruiting and developing many community activists to become public servants and run for public office. She has utilized her extensive network of relationships and years of experience within the Georgia Republican Party, the 11th Congressional District, and the Cherokee County Republican Party to lay a foundation which will impact Cherokee County for years to come.

She has devoted countless hours volunteering her time, talents, and energy to serve eleven years on the Zoning Board of Appeals; and, during her eighteen years of service on the Tax Equalization Board, she played a vital role for Cherokee County in steering the future of the county by applying commonsense conservative values.

In her thirty-three years of dedicated service on the Cherokee County Board of Elections, Cindy has helped to set a standard of excellence, and helped develop the Board into one of Georgia's finest and most innovative entities.

She has provided invaluable support and has been instrumental in the development of the Cherokee County Republican Party for the past forty years. She exemplifies the very best of public service and is truly an inspiration to so many. It is abundantly fitting and proper that Cindy's dedication to the cause of faith, family, and freedom be appropriately recognized in the U.S. House of Representatives.

On behalf of the citizens of Cherokee County, Georgia's 11th Congressional District, and myself and my family, I offer my sincere appreciation to Mrs. Cindy Castello for her decades of faithful public service to our community.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF SAMANTHA WOLL

HON. ELISSA SLOTKIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, it is with profound grief that I pay tribute to the life of a passionate advocate, a dedicated former Congressional staff member, an organizer, and a true believer in interfaith dialogue, Samantha Woll. Sam had a brilliant mind, a generous spirit, and was a true light in the community. While we do not yet know the circumstances of her death, we do know how she lived, so today I ask that we remember the profound impact she had on her community, our state, and the Nation in her short time on this earth.

Sam worked for me from nearly the moment I became a Congresswoman—helping us set up the Lansing office in 2019 and helping to lead it for my full first term as Team Slotkin's Deputy District Director. Like everyone who met her, I was immediately struck by her kindness, her sharp mind, and her ever-present smile. Though she was young, Sam came to our team already well-established, having worked for multiple members of the state legislature, as well as many different causes close to her heart. She would go on to work for Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel and State Senator Stephanie Chang, among others.

I was also struck by her profound faith; not just her personal faith in Judaism, but her profound faith in humanity. Sam dedicated her time on my staff, and truly her entire life, to building understanding and bridges between people, and bringing light in the face of darkness. She helped establish our first interfaith roundtable and continued that work when she left our office, serving as president of the Isaac Agree Synagogue in Detroit where she was known for her outreach and dialogue with her Muslim and Christian neighbors. As the Detroit Jewish News noted in naming her one of the "36 Under 36" influential young people in the Jewish community, "By extending her hand and creating space for connection between Muslims and Jews, she has exemplified the values of healing the world." She also played a vital role in the revitalization of Detroit, including the renovation and reopening of her historic synagogue just a few months ago. It is deeply painful that we have lost someone so dedicated to healing, and connecting so many people, no matter their background, to such a destructive act.

Sam's senseless death has left a hole not just in our hearts but in the fabric of our community. She was a beacon of light and I ask that as we grieve her loss, we recommit ourselves to the principles by which she lived. Sam firmly believed in the power of government to do good: to lift people out of poverty, to give a voice to the voiceless, and to bring justice and equality to all. She was deeply committed to the idea that what united us as Americans and Michiganders was much more important than the ways some try to divide us. I send my deepest condolences to all who knew and loved her. May her memory be a blessing forever in our hearts.

**RECOGNIZING CARLA SCRUGGS'
32+ YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE
CITY OF SALINE**

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, I rise today to recognize Carla Scruggs, the Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Saline, on the occasion of her retirement. Her contributions to the health and wellness of the Saline community over the last three decades are worthy of commendation.

Born and raised in Ann Arbor, MI, Carla graduated from Pioneer High School before attending Central Michigan University, where she spent four years on the softball team. After earning both her bachelor's and master's

degrees, she set out on a career in public service throughout Southeastern Michigan. In 1988, Carla began at the City of Hazel Park as a graduate intern specializing in senior programming and youth and adult sports. She then went to Novi, where she took on the position of Recreation Coordinator for the city's Parks and Recreation Department. In 1991, Carla was brought on as the Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Saline, where she has been serving ever since.

Carla's tenure at the head of the Saline Parks and Recreation Department has seen countless improvements to Saline's green spaces. These include, but are certainly not limited to, the Recreate Our Mill Pond Park play structure, multiple dog parks, and the creation of Salt Springs Park. As well as being the Director, Carla also acts as the Staff Liaison to the Parks Commission and the Youth Council. She has been an active member for the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association for the entirety of her tenure and is currently the Chair of their Awards Committee. In her free time, Carla volunteers every year for the Punt Pass & Kick State Competition, Saline's DARE golf outing, the PPSA golf outing, and the University of Michigan Softball Academy to raise awareness for breast cancer.

Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, I ask my colleagues to join me today in celebrating the 32+ years of public service that Carla Scruggs has been kind enough to dedicate her life to. She has given our children spaces to play, our dogs spaces to run, and altogether has made Saline a warmer and more welcoming place to live. Though we are sad to see her go, the families of Saline will be feeling her positive influence for decades to come. I thank Carla.

ALL VETERANS HONOR GUARD

HON. KEN BUCK

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, I rise today to honor the All Veterans Honor Guard, who provide the final Military Honors at Fort Logan National Cemetery in Colorado. Only those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces are permitted to provide such services but in 1993, the U.S. Military ceased to perform these final rites for deceased veterans.

That's why approximately 100 Colorado veterans formed the All Veterans Honor Guard in 1994 to carry on this sacred duty for their late comrades in arms. Aside from a small stipend from the state of Colorado, the organization receives no additional funding or compensation to maintain and repair the World War II-era weapons or to purchase uniforms for their volunteers.

During their first year, the All Veterans Honor Guard provided Military Honors for 63 veterans at Ft. Logan National Cemetery—and since 1994, they have stood as the Honor Guard for over 23,400 military funerals; with Chief Master Sergeant Retired Morris Smith serving as the backbone for over two decades. But as time has gone on, the number of requests for their services has grown as our aging veterans pass away. The number of volunteers, however, has diminished. In 2021, the All Veterans Honor Guard had less than

80 veteran volunteers, who provided the final honors for 1,554 veterans.

Despite these challenges, the Honor Guard remains as dedicated to serving their late brothers and sisters in their afterlife as they were in serving alongside them in life. That is why, Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, on behalf of the 4th Congressional District of Colorado, it is a distinct privilege to recognize and commemorate the tireless efforts of the All Veterans Honor Guard over the past 29 years. Our country is blessed to have such heroes who care enough to honor their comrades as they are laid to rest.

**COMMEMORATING COOK COUNTY
BOARD'S "MEDICAL DEBT RE-
LIEF INITIATIVE"**

HON. RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, I wish to recognize the transformative "Medical Debt Relief Initiative" in Cook County, Illinois which has successfully abolished \$281,338,840 of medical debt for Cook County residents. I applaud the tireless efforts of Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and the Cook County Board to provide much needed relief to 158,541 residents. This innovative program, in partnership with the national nonprofit "RIP Medical Debt," reallocated \$12 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to provide invaluable relief to Cook County families, many of whom are living paycheck to paycheck.

Medical debt continues to be a crisis in our country. According to "RIP Medical Debt," every day, 1 in 2 Americans must choose between paying medical bills and covering their basic needs. This is unacceptable. Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, more Americans have health insurance coverage now than ever before, but despite these historic strides, costs remain a barrier to accessing high-quality healthcare. Low and moderate-income American households continue to accrue medical debt and continue to be harmed by its financial and mental effects.

During a time of rising costs, Congress must do its part to assist working families. We must seek bipartisan solutions to reform our healthcare system because no one should be punished for becoming sick or receiving medical care. While we seek bipartisan policy solutions, partnerships across all levels of government should continue to facilitate medical debt relief. This relief, such as the "Medical Debt Relief Initiative" in Cook County, Illinois, has the power to give economic mobility to working families and boost our economy. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, I extend immense gratitude to the Cook County Board, under the direction of Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle, for being a model for other jurisdictions across the country. I continue to seek opportunities to advance commonsense models like this one to address the medical debt crisis.