

RECOGNIZING THE 2023 AMERICAN
AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION
STARS OF LIFE HONOREES

HON. CLIFF BENTZ

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Mr. BENTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the members of the emergency medical services (EMS) profession who are on the frontlines of providing vital emergency 9–1–1 and interfacility ambulance services. These individuals dedicate their lives to providing often lifesaving medical care and transport services to patients as well as entire communities.

I would like to highlight a very special group of EMS professionals or “Stars of Life” who are being honored this week by the American Ambulance Association. These Stars of Life will be meeting with their members of Congress today and tomorrow and I strongly encourage my colleagues to take the time to chat with these exceptional individuals.

For the past thirty years, the American Ambulance Association has honored those paramedics, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), dispatchers and other ambulance service personnel who exemplify what is best about the EMS field. The American Ambulance Association has appropriately designated these individuals as “Stars of Life”. Past Stars of Life have included paramedics and EMTs who were part of evacuation and response efforts to natural disasters, acts of terrorism and public health emergencies.

Every year, the dispatch of an ambulance is the first response to millions of medical emergencies. Often, the survival of a patient is enhanced by the prompt medical attention provided by paramedics and emergency medical technicians prior to the arrival at an emergency department. As a result of the selfless acts of these courageous and devoted professions, the lives of thousands of Americans are saved each year. While these professionals do not expect to receive recognition for their work, they deserve our outmost gratitude.

Of equal importance, this program also pays tribute to those ambulance service personnel whose heroic acts or community service activities may not have made the news, but were just as meaningful to the people they aided. They are truly America’s health care safety net.

I am especially proud of the six Stars of Life from Oregon being recognized this year who work for five different ambulance service organizations and serve Oregonians with pride. They are Carol Boies, Sean Fuller, Victor Hoffer, Daniel Lee, Kristina Ploeger, and Don Thomas. I had the opportunity to meet with Kristina Ploeger from Baker City today and can tell you firsthand that she is an exceptional individual and a fantastic representative of the EMS profession.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS
ACT, 2024

SPEECH OF

HON. LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 2, 2023

Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER. Mr. Chair, today I rise in support of my amendment to H.R. 4821, Amendment No. 34.

This amendment highlights the pressing need to address the affordable drinking water crisis afflicting over a million American women, children, and families. Water is a foundational building block for healthy and thriving lives, yet far too many people struggle to afford this basic and essential need. Providing robust funding for the Environmental Programs and Management account will enable the establishment of the much-needed federal low-income water program pilot authorized in section 50108 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and bring us closer to affordable clean water for every American.

For decades, there have been federal assistance programs to help low-income individuals afford essentials such as housing, food, and home energy bills. But no such equivalent program exists for access to water. State-level low-income water assistance has therefore become a critical lifeline for vulnerable families struggling to pay bills and maintain access to water services, yet the lack of federal support hamstrings state efforts to assist all those with limited access to clean drinking water. To address this glaring programmatic gap, IIJA authorized the creation of a rural and low-income water assistance pilot program upon completion of an accompanying needs assessment at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). To date, this needs assessment has not been completed. This needs assessment is critical to the establishment of the water assistance program because it will give the EPA and Congress the insight they need to better understand this important issue and take steps towards the creation of a nationwide, permanent low-income assistance program.

Water bills have become increasingly expensive, placing greater burdens on families that already struggle to afford their water bills. A 2019 survey found that U.S. households in the bottom fifth of the economy spent 12.4 percent of their disposable income on water and sewer services. In recent years, this statistic has increased steadily. No one should have to decide between paying their water bill or buying groceries to feed their family. Historic investments were made in IIJA and it is the duty of Congress and our federal government to ensure these dollars are reaching the people and households it was intended to help. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the Administration to help our communities access critical support systems.

RECOGNIZING THE CAREER OF
MONICA BIBBS

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the critically important and remarkable work of Monica Bibbs, who recently stepped down as Director of School Strategies & Logistics at the W.B. Patterson Elementary School, a public school in the District of Columbia.

At W.B. Patterson Elementary School, Ms. Bibbs delivered high-quality work on time, prioritized tasks and managed her time well and demonstrated excellent organizational skills.

Ms. Bibbs began her teaching career in 1987 at H.D. Woodson Senior High School as a mathematics teacher. In 2007, she went to work in central administration as a secondary school numeracy coach and mathematics content specialist.

In 2014, she went to work at W.B. Patterson Elementary School as an Assistant Principal, where she worked collaboratively to achieve team goals and contributed positively to team dynamics, fostering a positive work environment. In 2016, she began serving as Director of School Strategies & Logistics, a role she performed with dedication and a strong work ethic until her retirement this year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in recognizing Monica Bibbs and her nearly 35 years of incredible service to public schools in D.C.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF OMER BALVA

HON. DAVID J. TRONE

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Mr. TRONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the service of dual-American and Israeli citizen—Omer Balva—who made the ultimate sacrifice while defending Israel from terrorism.

Omer grew up in Rockville, Maryland, where he lived until he was 18. Every summer, he traveled to Israel to visit relatives, and quickly fell in love with the beautiful country, where his parents came from. After graduating high school from the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School, he moved to Israel to join the Israeli military—ready and willing to step up and defend his new home, his family, and his friends. He finished his three-year IDF service and then enrolled in college. A few weeks ago, Omer traveled to America with his girlfriend to vacation and visit friends—including his best friend, Ethan Missner, and Ethan’s father, Jonathan Missner, whom I consider a friend.

After the heinous terrorist attacks against Israel on October 7th, Omer was recalled from his vacation in America to his unit in order to mobilize and deploy to the Lebanese border to protect against ongoing attacks. On Friday, October 20th—just three days after being deployed—he was killed in action. He was 22 years old.

Omer had big life plans. He was soon to get married, start a family, work at his father’s

business, and teach his future children to love Israel as much as he did. He had his whole life ahead of him, and today we mourn the life he lost.

His commitment to the greater good, his unwavering bravery, and his altruism were a guiding light for all who knew him. And although we can never repay Omer or his family for his courageous efforts, may his memory be a blessing.

We must honor Omer Balva for his service and strength to fight back against terrorism as we hope for peace in Israel and beyond. May his memory be a blessing.

HONORING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF COOKEVILLE

HON. JOHN W. ROSE

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Mr. ROSE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate First Baptist Church of Cookeville on 150 years of spreading the gospel throughout Middle Tennessee. I was raised at First Baptist Church. I came to know my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, was baptized, and was a member for many years at First Baptist. My wife Chelsea and I were married in this church so, needless to say, I received many blessings from this congregation.

The church was organized in 1873 as the Cookeville Baptist Church of Christ. The church's first Pastor, Patrick Moore, led a congregation of 34 members. Together, they agreed to a church covenant, which reads in part, "the purpose of this body is to advance the church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort promoting prosperity and spirituality." They continue to fulfill that commitment 150 years later.

Today, the church enjoys a membership of more than 1,300 members and an average attendance of more than 450. But their story isn't one of instant success. It's one of persistence and faith.

There were long periods of time when the church stopped meeting for worship. In fact, with 20 members at the time, the church underwent a reorganization in 1892. And it wasn't until 21 years after the church's founding that the congregation was able to secure their own House of Worship.

Like so many churches, First Baptist Church of Cookeville was impacted by the Great Depression in the 1930s, which led to the church opting to discontinue their pastor's salary through the end of the year. But that decade was about more than loss for the church. It was also in the 1930s that the Women's Missionary Union was formed, along with the Young Women's Auxiliary and Girl's Auxiliary for the women and girls of the church. The church also formed groups for the boys and men of the church, including the Royal Ambassadors and Baptist Brotherhood.

This is a common theme of this church's story. Through difficult times, they stood firm in their faith and found ways to continue being a blessing to others. First Baptist Church of Cookeville started several missions over the years, missions that later became standalone congregations.

The church began reaching out to students at the nearby Tennessee Polytechnic Institute,

now known as Tennessee Tech University, as early as 1926. They even built a Baptist Student Center, which continues to be a resource for young people to this day.

First Baptist Church of Cookeville was also a pioneer in broadcasting sermons on tv, which they began doing in 1973. The church continues to broadcast their services today, bringing the Word of God to homes throughout the Upper Cumberland.

Whether it be serving their local community through missions like Operation Christmas Child or the Family Life Center, or a mission overseas, the folks making up the church embody what it means to have a servant's heart.

Again, I want to congratulate First Baptist Church of Cookeville on continuing to fulfill that covenant written all those years ago. I wish Pastor Scott McKinney the best of luck as he continues to guide the church in the years ahead. I pray they will continue to be a blessing to their community, and to the region, for another 150 years.

RECOGNIZING THE HEROIC SERVICE OF KADRI CAKRANI DURING THE HOLOCAUST

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to recognize the humanitarian efforts of Albanian Commandant General Kadri Cakrani.

On Saturday, November 11, 2023, the Albanian and Southeastern European Studies Program at DePaul University will host an event entitled, The Cakrani Family of Albania: Repairing the Fabric of History, that will honor the work of General Cakrani in protecting Jews during the Holocaust and advancing Democracy in Albania. Illinois is the home of many relatives of General Cakrani, including my constituents Elizabeth Cakrani Vrato, Evan Metaj, and Abigail Vrato—his granddaughter, great-great grandson, and great-great granddaughter, respectively.

During the German occupation of Albania, Commandant-General Cakrani led the protection of over 600 Jewish refugees and residents in the Berat region from Nazi capture during the Holocaust. At risk of death, General Cakrani lied to Nazi officials about the whereabouts of Jews hiding in Albania and guided efforts to shelter Jews in safe hiding locations, including his own home. His courage and leadership contributed to Albania being the only European country that ended World War II with more Jewish residents than at the start of the war. Further, General Cakrani sheltered three American Army nurses and secretly returned them to Allies after their plane crashed in Albania.

In 1951, General Cakrani moved to the United States after President Harry Truman granted him political asylum. He worked with the U.S. Intelligence to try to bring Democracy to Albania for the remainder of his life. The lives and safety of families and individuals depended on General Cakrani's silence about his efforts during his lifetime. The DePaul event is a step to recognize his humanitarian work during and after the war.

The Auschwitz Memorial Museum, the United States Holocaust Museum, the Illinois

Holocaust Museum, the Jerusalem Post, and the Israel Hayom have all recognized General Cakrani's service and bravery. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker recently issued an executive proclamation recognizing November 11, 2023, as Kadri Cakrani Day in Illinois.

I wish to add my voice to those recognizing the service and bravery of Commandant-General Kadri Cakrani in the protection of Jews during the Holocaust and his work to promote Democracy in Albania. I wish his family well as they honor his work this week at the DePaul event on Kadri Cakrani Day in Illinois.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. VERN BUCHANAN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Speaker, on Roll Call No. 570 and No. 571, I inadvertently voted Aye. I oppose the Perry Amendments, and both votes should be recorded as Nay.

COMMEMORATING THE 2023 RANGERS WORLD SERIES

HON. COLIN Z. ALLRED

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Mr. ALLRED. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to commemorate a historic achievement by the Texas Rangers.

The Texas Rangers won the World Series for the first time in franchise history despite many setbacks and injuries along the way.

On Friday, November 3, 2023, Arlington, TX hosted a well-deserved Championship Parade.

As a Congressman for North Texas and a lifelong Rangers fan, I am excited to celebrate this hard-fought victory with the Rangers and my fellow fans.

Achievements such as this don't happen overnight, and they take the support of families, friends, coaches, fans, staff and crew. It really does take a community. And the Metroplex should be proud.

As a former professional athlete myself, I know the hard work it takes, day in and day out, to practice and work to win as a team. All while forging ahead in the face of adversity.

They have shown that North Texans are champions, and we couldn't be prouder of what they all have accomplished together.

Go Rangers.

GRAND OPENING OF EMERGENCE HEALTH NETWORK VETERANS ONE STOP CENTER IN EAST EL PASO

HON. VERONICA ESCOBAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the Emergence Health Network Veterans One Stop Center for their continuous innovation to expand mental and behavioral health services to El Paso veterans and active-duty military and their families.