

## HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MR. JAMES PURCELL

### HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 6, 2023*

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life of a constituent and dedicated public servant from my district, James "Jim" Purcell. Mr. Purcell passed away on November 28, 2023, at the age of 70.

Born in Philadelphia, PA, Jim graduated in 1971 from Archbishop Wood High School in Warminster, PA. After, he completed his electrician apprenticeship in 1975 and obtained a degree in energy efficiency. He would later go on to become an electrician for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local No. 98 for over 40 years.

Jim, a revered member of the Perkasio community, will forever be recognized for his exemplary commitment and public service to his community. Jim joined the water authority when he was 25 years old, and he had 41 years of service, including 23 years on the authority and 15 years on council where he served as Vice President of the Perkasio Borough Council for many years. During this period, Jim was instrumental in the development of Perkasio's public power policies and was recognized as providing outstanding public service throughout his life.

Jim will always be remembered as a loving Husband, Father and Grandfather and we are all incredibly grateful for the positive impact he has had on our community. Let us continue his legacy of public service each and every day.

## CONGRESSIONAL VETERAN COM- MENDATION FOR CHIEF WAR- RANT OFFICER HERBERT RICH

### HON. PAT FALLON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 6, 2023*

Mr. FALLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Chief Warrant Officer 3 Herbert James "Jim" Rich of Sulphur Springs, Texas, and award him a Congressional Veteran Commendation. CW3 Rich honorably served in the United States Army during the Gulf War.

From a young age, CW3 Rich sought to serve and represent our great nation on the global stage. He began his Army career as a truck driver and finance clerk before successfully completing flight training as a helicopter pilot. Initially, he served as a utility helicopter pilot and operations officer during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm to help stop Iraqi aggression against Kuwait.

CW3 Rich later served as a commander of a helicopter company for the National Training Center before becoming a medical evacuation pilot in Alaska. In 1994, he also participated in Joint Indo-Pacific military exercises in Thailand. Without a doubt, his actions helped save many lives. For his meritorious service, CW3 Rich was awarded the Air Medal, Senior Aviator Badge, and several other awards.

After returning to civilian life, CW3 Rich has continued to make an impact in our community and dedicated himself to public service.

He currently volunteers as a fireman and assistant chief in his community. CW3 is also a member of the East Texas Marine Corps League Detachment 1357, in which he works to uplift and support fellow veterans while raising awareness for veterans' issues. I commend CW3 Rich for his selfless service and devotion to assisting those in need.

I am honored to represent CW3 Rich in Texas' 4th Congressional district. It is a pleasure to award him the Congressional Veteran Commendation for his service to our Nation and to the people of North Texas.

## CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF UNITED STATES NAVY COM- MANDER LEONARD MERRIMAN III

### HON. TROY A. CARTER

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 6, 2023*

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate an outstanding New Orleans Serviceman, United States Navy Commander Leonard Merriman III. Commander Merriman was born on September 27, 1953, in New Orleans, LA, and was the only child of Mr. Leonard Merriman, Jr. and Mrs. Alberta Slocum Merriman.

Leonard attended Mary D. Coghill Elementary School and went on to attend the prestigious St. Augustine High School ("St. Aug.") in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he excelled and became a member of the football and track & field teams. Leonard quickly gained a reputation at school for his various competitive endeavors as a tough, "never-give-up", and fearless guy. This was never more on display than when Leonard would speed off to school at St. Aug on his motorcycle at 16 years old. Leonard would go on to graduate from St. Aug as a member of the class of 1971 and later that same year, he joined the United States Navy.

The Navy gave Leonard the adventure he craved and the structure that he needed. For Leonard, the Navy allowed him the opportunity to attend the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland as a "Mid-Shipman." While at the Academy, Leonard also played football and became a world-class boxer in his weight class. He then attended the University of North Carolina Central where he earned his undergraduate degree.

Leonard also always had a dream of flying. While still in high school Leonard learned to fly planes by becoming friends with a Black Pilot who worked at Lakefront Airport near Pontchartrain Park. Armed with this knowledge when Leonard joined the Navy, he was presented with a golden opportunity, the choice to attend Navy Flight School at NAS Pensacola.

With that choice in hand, Leonard decided to attend flight school and became a Naval Aviator. He was then assigned for duty aboard the USS *Coral Sea* aircraft carrier. While in the Navy Leonard piloted the A-7 Corsair and the F-18 Hornet aircraft. During his service, he would achieve the rank of Commander and serve as the Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Mobile Maintenance Facility 0582. In his civilian career, Leonard decided to continue to fly for commercial airlines as a pilot for TWA, MESA,

U.S. Airways, and American, just to name a few.

Leonard was involved in many activities and organizations. Some of these included, being a member of Progress Lodge No 16, Prince Hall Affiliate, the National Black Pilot Association, Son of a Saint, The St. Augustine High School Alumni Association, The Silverback Society, the National Rifle Association (NRA), and Director of the Future Airline Pilots of New Orleans.

On October 19, 2023, Leonard went to be with his Heavenly Father. He was predeceased in death by his parents Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Merriman, Jr. He leaves behind three children: his eldest son, Leonard "Lenny" Merriman IV, and his wife Jeanine Young Merriman, daughter Lucretia Merriman, and his youngest son Leonard "Leo" Merriman IV. He is also survived by his grandchildren, Charlotte Merriman, and Myles Leonard Merriman, who were the absolute apples of his eye, and a host of other relatives and friends too countless to mention.

His legacy will live on through the bonds of friendship he made over the years and all those whose lives he touched. He will be remembered as a man who would defend you, was never too busy to help others, would strike up a conversation with almost anyone, and a Naval circumnavigator twice over.

At a young age, his family moved to a new home in Pontchartrain Park, and the Merriman family joined Bethany United Methodist Church located in Pontchartrain Park, which remained his home church throughout the remainder of his life. A celebration of life is being held today at Bethany United Methodist Church.

I was honored to have Leonard serving in the Louisiana Second Congressional District Military Academy Nomination Committee. His commitment to the Service Academy program assured key nominations of candidates for appointment to four of the five U.S. service academies: U.S. Military Academy (USMA), West Point, NY, the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), Annapolis, MD, the U.S. Air Force Academy (USFA), Colorado Springs, CO, and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), Kings Point, NY. The Greater New Orleans Community has suffered the loss of an incredible gem. I am proud to say I was able to connect with him during my tenure as Congressman. I truly respect the guidance and support he gave. I am forever grateful for his commitment to our youth, and guidance to our program. I will forever carry his direction as I serve the Constituents of LA-02. May he forever rest in peace.

KATHERINE NOLASCO

### HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 6, 2023*

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Katherine Nolasco for earning the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth Award.

Katherine has achieved great things, all while overcoming adversity and challenges along the way. Students like Katherine, who strive to make the most of their education, develop crucial skills and a work ethic that will

guide them for the rest of their lives. This award is a testament to Katherine's hard work, determination, and perseverance at Arvada High School and is clearly just the beginning of a bright and promising future.

It is my honor to congratulate Katherine Nolasco on achieving the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth award.

**STRONGLY CONDEMNING AND DENOUNCING THE DRASTIC RISE OF ANTISEMITISM IN THE UNITED STATES AND AROUND THE WORLD**

SPEECH OF

**HON. BETTY McCOLLUM**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 4, 2023*

Ms. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise to share my deep concern with H. Res. 894 and the way it fails to address the rise in hate speech and threats occurring in our country and around the world. Over the last several weeks, the House has rightly made efforts to condemn antisemitism and show support for the Jewish people. However, this resolution does not seriously address the rise in antisemitism in any tangible way, and the actions of the Majority to treat this issue as an opportunity to confuse and sow division is redundant, devoid of meaning, and ultimately harmful to the cause of rebuking hate in all its forms.

Congress must take meaningful steps to fight against antisemitism. We can do this by stepping away from political games and fully implementing the Biden Administration's National Antisemitism Strategy, a whole-of-government approach to fighting antisemitism in the United States.

I also want to underscore the importance of prioritizing the safety of Jewish, Palestinian, and Muslim communities. The resolution before us today is silent on the concurrent rise of anti-Arab hate and Islamophobia happening in America, and by failing to include all instances of bigotry stemming from the conflict, we are missing an opportunity to condemn hate in all its forms.

In Congress we must be open to discussing and disagreeing about challenging topics, including about Israel and Gaza. I remain committed to condemning hate speech and the violence it inspires and believe that any actions considered in the House must also do so. For these reasons, I must vote present on this resolution.

**CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF  
PHILIP M. BAPTISTE, JR.**

**HON. TROY A. CARTER**

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 6, 2023*

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a native of my Congressional District, often referred to as "The Leader in Firsts", Mr. Philip M. Baptiste, Jr.

Philip M. Baptiste was born and raised in New Orleans, LA and dedicated himself to serving and bettering New Orleans' urban

community. Baptiste attended two Historically Black Universities, Dillard University of New Orleans, and Atlanta University School of Social Work.

Baptiste lived a lifetime of firsts; in 1967 he was appointed by Mayor Victor Schiro as the city's first Black mayoral aide. In a 1996 interview with Data Newsweekly, Baptiste said "I was the only Black in City Hall at that time." That position would open the doors for other black Louisianians to follow. Baptiste was also the first Black man to serve the Orleans Parish Grand Jury in New Orleans. As President and Owner of Philip M. Baptiste Insurance Agency, Inc. which handled all lines of general insurance, i.e. Life, Fire, Casualty, and Hospitalization, Baptiste became one of the first Black citizens to hold such a license in the State of Louisiana.

Baptiste was recruited by the U S. Army on February 6, 1950, and honorably discharged on May 25, 1950 after completing the 14 week basic training program.

Conceivably, Baptiste's greatest passion was his love for the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club. A member for 40 plus years, Baptiste once served as the organization's Recording Secretary and obtained the status of "Honorary Lifetime Member" and a Zulu Hall of Fame Member. In the 1980s, Baptiste organized the 1st Motor Patrol group of riders and became a welcoming presence every Mardi Gras Day on his scooter. As the official narrator for the annual Zulu Coronation Ball, in typical Baptiste fashion, he created a unique toast for coronation and other official Zulu events; "All Hail Sip, All Hail Sip, All Hail Swallow!" Anyone present at his toast will never forget how Baptiste went deep in the Merriam-Webster dictionary to describe King Zulu 1994 as "being in all his splendiferousness."

Zulu's official historian noted that Baptiste is responsible for design changes to the organization's official medallion from a dull bronze to a bright gold color, as well as for securing Fischer's Jewelry as the maker of the official King's ring. Baptiste is also credited with leading and supporting many of Zulu's fundraising activities for its charitable activities.

During the time Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, Baptiste had served as Executive Director of Opportunities Industrialization Center of Greater New Orleans (OIC of GNO) for approximately 35 years. Founded in 1971, the entity's mission is to train and place the unemployed and under-employed individuals into unsubsidized jobs in New Orleans by helping them to overcome barriers to economic opportunity and social justice Baptiste assumed the leadership helm in February of 1972, taking the Manpower program from the threat of termination to one of the more successful programs under the OIC of America umbrella.

Under Baptiste's leadership, he guided the entity through important initiatives including CETA City of New Orleans Home Energy Rehabilitation, Office of Community Affairs LIHEAP, DOE/PVE Home Weatherization, Housing and Community Development Home Weatherization and Minor Repairs, JTPA City of New Orleans Carpentry, Department of Social Services DOE/PVE, LIHEAP, State of Louisiana Governor's Special Grant, and a Re-entry and Work Release programs in partnership with the Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriffs Office which provides training in construc-

tion trades in the areas of carpentry, electrical work and plumbing for prison inmates preparing to return to society. He was one of the first to introduce the GED program to participants of OIC, thus helping hundreds to complete that high school education.

A close friend of New Orleans' first Black mayor, the late Ernest "Dutch" Morial, Baptiste, along with Leah and Dooky Chase, were the first financial contributors to Dutch's campaign fund during his run for mayor. A 1950 graduate of McDonogh 35 High School, Baptiste had known Dutch Morial since their days together at the school where Morial was a quarterback and Baptiste was a water boy on the football team Baptiste was also an early supporter of the elder Morial's son, Marc Morial who served as Mayor of New Orleans from 1994 through 2002. As a member of the Louisiana Federation of Electors (LIFE), one of the most powerful Black political organizations in New Orleans, Baptiste remained politically active for decades Countless other African American elected officials would come to learn that they could count on Baptiste's support as well.

Baptiste's social and civic affiliations support his theory of reaching out to the community. Baptiste was a member of the Board of Directors, Southwestern Providence, KAPPA ALPHA PSI Fraternity (pledged in 1954, Beta Gamma; Polemarch from 1969 through 1970) and member of the New Orleans Alumni Chapter, Solicitor to Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, and eventually Honorary Deputy, Parish of Orleans for contributing and participating in the Orleans Parish Grand Jury. Baptiste was the founder and First Vice-President of Frontiers International, Past President of Toastmasters International, Dryades Street YMCA, the Urban League of New Orleans, and the NAACP among others.

Always a believer in self-improvement, Baptiste continued to receive training to help improve his management skills; including courses such as Management Skills Development Course sponsored by General Electric Management Development Institute, Executive Directors Management Training Course I, II, III and IV (OAMT) Opportunities Academy of Management Training OIC/America, Management Certificate in Non-Profit Organizations, IBM Community Executive Program and IBM Management Development Staff Program and others.

Baptiste's work has earned him many honored awards and certificates: Individual Achievement Award Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity 1975, Street YWCA Century Club 1976–1978, National Consumer Information Center Award 1974–1975, Honorary Citizen Certificates (Baton Rouge, LA, Albuquerque, New Mexico and Saginaw, Michigan), State of Texas House of Representative Congratulation Certificate 1977 and Certificates of Merit City of New Orleans 1972–73, 1977, the 1996 Joseph "Scoop" Jones Trailblazer for the month of December, 2001 Mayor's Division of Housing & Neighborhood Development Golden Hammer Award are just a few awards of recognition collected in his repertoire.

Baptiste died June 21 in Atlanta after a lengthy illness. He was 91. He and his wife Nell, who died in 2021, relocated to Atlanta after Hurricane Katrina Prior to that, he spent his entire life in his hometown of New Orleans Baptiste once said that he would like to be remembered by these words, "I came, learned,