

RECOGNIZING HELENA LOCAL AND MONTANA SENATE AIDE JACKSON RACICOT FOR HIS OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SERVICE

HON. MATTHEW M. ROSENDALE, SR.
OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mr. ROSENDALE. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to recognize the work of an outstanding young man whose service in the Montana Legislature is an example of the extraordinary impact those with physical disabilities can have on their community.

Jack Racicot is an aide to the Montana Legislature and serves as a clerk for the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee.

During the 2021 Legislative Session, Jack was on a snowboarding trip at Great Divide Ski Area near Helena where he suffered a debilitating accident that crushed his C5 vertebrae and left him paralyzed from the neck down.

After an extensive recovery at the University of Utah Medical Center, Jack returned to the Senate as an aide in the 68th Legislative Session and continues to serve with distinction to this day. Jack's courageous return to work is a poignant reminder of the strength of Montana's young men and women.

I'm humbled to see such a dedicated young man serving his state despite his injuries, and I am proud to recognize him in the United States House of Representatives.

RECOGNIZING THE DESIGNATION OF GAINESVILLE'S NEW VA CLINICS

HON. KAT CAMMACK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Florida's Third Congressional District, I'm proud to recognize the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System for its service on behalf of our nation's veterans through the dedication of the Gainesville Veteran Affairs Mental Health Facility, which began providing care to veterans in 2022.

The clinic, located in Gainesville, Florida, is a state-of-the-art, 39,932 square-foot facility that offers mental health intensive care management, a psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery center, a substance abuse clinic, a compensated work therapy clinic, a post-traumatic stress disorder clinic, community care, and suicide prevention services. The construction of this facility began in 2017 when it was approved by the U.S. Congress as part of the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017.

Our men and women in uniform make the ultimate sacrifice while fighting to protect our nation, and it is our duty as Americans to ensure that they have exceptional health care following their service to the Stars and Stripes.

The North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System has demonstrated a deep commitment to the needs of veterans and their families by constantly striving to expand and improve the quality of care available to our nation's heroes. The dedication of the Gaines-

ville Veteran Affairs Primary Care Facility, since its opening in 2022, has played a vital role in ensuring that our veterans in Florida's Third Congressional District are provided for through the accessibility of experienced health care providers and critical mental health resources.

I'd like to extend a special thank you to the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System for all it has done to serve our community in Florida's Third Congressional District, and I'm excited to see how the Gainesville VA Mental Health Facility will continue to provide for our veterans.

RECOGNIZING THE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM 35TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Housing Development Consortium for their 35 years of service and affordable housing advocacy within King County.

The Housing Development Consortium (HDC) is a nonprofit organization in King County that has supported countless housing organizations, businesses, and government organizations to meet the housing needs of people with diverse incomes. HDC is a nationally recognized leader in affordable housing advocacy, and their commitment to the Puget Sound region has made tremendous impacts. From fighting for increased funding for new low-income housing to maximizing opportunities for those living on a limited income, HDC continues to play an important role in affordable housing advocacy. Further, HDC pursues these goals through a lens of sustainability to reduce emissions and energy costs for residents. Their work makes our community a safer, better place for all who reside throughout the Puget Sound region.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply grateful for the Housing Development Consortium and their critical work, and I look forward to continuing to work with them to ensure that the residents of King County have access to safe and affordable housing.

CONGRESSIONAL PROCLAMATION FOR MISSISSIPPI TORNADO RECOVERY

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart as the people of the Mississippi Delta recover from the violent tornadoes that ripped through the 2nd Congressional District last Friday night.

Whereas, the communities in Rolling Fork, Silver City, and Winona were devastated by violent tornadoes on Friday, March 24, 2023; and

Whereas, the Mississippi Delta region is one of the most disadvantaged regions in the United States; and

Whereas, we mourn those who lost their lives, and I am praying for their loved ones in this difficult time; and

Whereas, President Joseph R. Biden, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, and Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) Administrator Deanne Criswell acted swiftly to initiate a federal response for the disaster relief effort in Mississippi; and

Whereas, the state of Mississippi has neglected to expand Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act, costing Mississippi over \$14 billion that could have helped communities recover across the 2nd Congressional District; and now, therefore be it

Resolved, That the United States Congress sends its thoughts and prayers to the people of Mississippi as they pick up the pieces and emerge stronger than ever.

HONORING MAYOR ROBERT "BOB" BLAIS FOR HIS 52 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Robert "Bob" Blais on an incredible 52-year career as the Mayor of the Village of Lake George. He is currently the country's longest serving mayor and his extraordinary tenure stands as proof of his exceptional stewardship of the Lake George community. While he is retiring at the end of this term, the echoes of his remarkable impact will carry on for decades.

Mayor Blais has devoted the entirety of his adult life to improving and revitalizing the Village of Lake George. He was first elected a village trustee in 1968 but was also a staple in the community for many years prior, serving as a volunteer firefighter, a police officer, and even a dog warden. Just three years after his election to the town board, Blais then mounted a campaign for mayor. He took his first oath of office in June of 1971 and spent the next half century guiding the village toward a brighter future. From strengthening the infrastructure, to preserving Lake George's natural ecosystem, and bolstering the local tourism industry, the outsized effect of Mayor Blais can be seen throughout the village.

From his earliest years in office, Mayor Blais has worked tirelessly to transform the Village of Lake George into a world-renowned tourism destination known for its family friendly atmosphere and widespread appeal. He has been a patient steward of his community's success, a consummate public servant, always willing to set aside his own ego in favor of the village's best interests. Known for responding to every letter and making time for every concern, Mayor Blais put his constituents first, which is a model that all aspiring public servants should aim to follow.

No individual can claim a greater degree of personal responsibility for the village's revitalization and enduring success than Mayor Robert "Bob" Blais. He has dedicated nearly six decades to guiding his local community, and on behalf of New York's 21st Congressional District, I am honored to recognize his exceptional leadership and celebrate his remarkable career.

GUN VIOLENCE IN ILLINOIS'S
FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

HON. JONATHAN L. JACKSON

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart in the aftermath of another mass shooting in Tennessee that claimed 6 lives, including 3 innocent children. I stand here as a representative of a district plagued by the epidemic of gun violence.

Chicago, our beloved city, suffers from a firearm homicide rate that overshadows other major U.S. cities. From 2018 to 2022, almost 14,000 shooting incidents have scarred our communities and shattered countless families.

As I speak on this matter, I must emphasize the disproportionate impact on our Black communities. In our state of Illinois, Black individuals are 32 times more likely to die by gun homicide than their White counterparts, a rate triple the national average. This is not just a statistic; it is a heart-wrenching reality and a gross injustice that we must confront and dismantle with unyielding determination.

Our children, the beacons of hope for our future, suffer most in the face of this violence. Firearms are the leading cause of death for children in Illinois, claiming an average of 183 young lives each year. The stark truth is that in Illinois, Black children and teens are 13 times more likely to die from gun violence than their White peers. Around 60 percent of Chicago's youngest children live in communities where 91 percent of homicides took place.

Our children's mental health continues to deteriorate under the burden of fear and anxiety from exposure to gun violence. Over 1 in 4 parents report their children hearing gunshots at home, and 1 in 5 parents say their children's mental health has been negatively affected.

It is our responsibility as lawmakers and leaders to bring forth meaningful change. We must start by implementing comprehensive background checks, closing the gun show loophole, and investing in mental health services for those affected by gun violence. We must pass the assault weapons ban to remove military-style weapons from our streets, prohibit unlicensed firearm ownership, and mandate that firearms transfers occur only with a valid license.

Additionally, we must establish and maintain a federal record of sale system and conduct fingerprint-based nationwide criminal background checks. Had these measures been in place, the gunman who killed 5 people in Aurora, IL in 2019 might have been prevented from acquiring the firearm used in the shooting.

Our children, our communities, and our Nation deserve better. We must be relentless in our pursuit of a safer, brighter future. Let us be united in our resolve, with hearts full of passion and eyes set on the prize of a peaceful tomorrow. Together, we can turn the tide of gun violence and restore hope to our great Nation.

Mr. Speaker, let us join hands in this righteous fight.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF AJ
GUNTHER

HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Allen "AJ" Gunther and his service to Virginia's First District and the Nation.

Prior to joining my office, AJ served as a Chaplain in the U.S. Army where he participated in humanitarian operations in Haiti, as well as a tours in Afghanistan and South Korea. He now serves as a Chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserves.

AJ joined my Tappahannock office in April 2021 as a Wounded Warrior Program Fellow and served in that role until April 2023. He helped resolve countless constituents' problems with federal agencies, contributing tremendously to providing the best constituent service in Virginia and the Nation. He has been a friendly and effective representative for myself, my team, and my work throughout the First Congressional District of Virginia and the Tidewater region.

I would like to thank AJ for his dedicated service over the last two years. He has been a key member of my district office team, and I wish him and his family the best as he moves on in his journey.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join me in recognizing and thanking AJ Gunther for his service to Virginia's First District and the Nation. May God bless AJ and his family in whatever endeavors he pursues next.

HONORING THE YEARS OF SERVICE OF MS. WENDI LIPSICH IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HON. JARED MOSKOWITZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank my District Director, Ms. Wendi Lipsich, for her remarkable 26 years of public service in the House of Representatives.

Since the age of 26, Wendi has been instrumental in helping multiple Members of Congress successfully serve our constituents. Wendi launched her career as a Congressional District Director to former Congressman Robert Wexler in 1997, soon after she graduated from the University of Miami Law School. While working for Congressman Wexler, Wendi married her husband Todd, and had 2 beautiful children, Taylor and Joey.

In commemoration of such a noteworthy career, I would like to relay a message from Congressman Wexler:

With an infectious smile and positive spirit, Wendi Lipsich has been a public servant in the truest sense for three decades. Wendi has helped countless people solve problems big and small. Everyone—and I mean everyone—loves Wendi. And for a good reason. Wendi personifies impeccable character and integrity. What joy it was for me to work alongside Wendi for 15+ years. The people of Palm Beach and Broward Counties owe Wendi enormous gratitude for her never-end-

ing dedication and kindness. Wendi is one of a kind, amazing!

Immediately after Congressman Wexler retired, she was hired as the District Director for my predecessor and friend, former Congressman Ted Deutch, from 2010 to 2022. Congressman Deutch had this to say about Wendi:

Wendi is more than the district director. She is and will continue to be a good friend to anyone needing assistance. Even if it's not related to Congress, people know Wendi will happily do anything she can to try to help them. She cares so deeply about our community and about all of the talented people she has worked with to help our constituents. Everyone, literally everyone, loves and appreciates Wendi Lipsich.

Mr. Speaker, I have always known Wendi to be a selfless public servant, and I am eternally grateful for her service to the constituents of Florida's 23rd Congressional District.

In addition to enjoying her professional life, Wendi goes above and beyond to give back to her community. She is the founder and Co-Chair of the Boca Raton Lupus Walk with the Alliance for Lupus Research and continues to play an active role in raising awareness and funds to help cure lupus. Wendi has also been the Hillel of Broward and Palm Beach Board Member and Chair of the Student Life Committee, Guardian Ad Litem Child Advocate with the 15th Judicial Circuit of West Palm Beach, Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County, Business and Professional Cabinet Co-Chair and Board Member, KidSafe Foundation Board Member, Spanish River Community High School Foundation Board Member, Junior League of Boca Raton's Volunteer of the Year honoree, Democratic Professionals Council of Palm Beach County, Alliance of Delray Association, Democratic National Convention Delegate and a supporter of many other charities.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating my friend and colleague, Ms. Wendi Lipsich, as she embarks on the next chapter of her career. I am eternally grateful to her for her years of service to our Nation and wish her all the best.

RECOGNIZING CUSTER GALLATIN FISHERIES BIOLOGIST CLINT SESTRICH FOR EARNING THE OUTSTANDING FISHERIES PROFESSIONAL AWARD FROM THE MONTANA AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

HON. MATTHEW M. ROSENDALE, SR.

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mr. ROSENDALE. Mr. Speaker, Montana's biodiversity and breathtaking natural beauty attract countless researchers and naturalists to our great state. This makes Clint Sestrich's recognition as this year's Outstanding Fisheries Professional by the Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society particularly impressive.

Clint became a member of the fisheries society in 1997 and has led multiple conservation efforts over the past 25 years. He distinguished himself on numerous occasions for his stewardship of Montana's fish populations, including his work on the Upper Shields YCT