

Carmen Ana Fournier Figueroa and Dr. Felix Rafael Vega Sala on their 60th wedding anniversary.

Carmen Ana and Felix Vega met in 1959 when they were 15 and 17 years old. She was born in Bayamón and he was born in Hatillo, Puerto Rico. Within a few years of meeting one another, they married in 1963 and moved to Seville, Spain, where Felix continued his medical education with the help and support of his devoted wife Carmen Ana. After four years in Spain, they returned to Puerto Rico where Felix completed his medical degree and obtained his license as a psychiatrist.

In 1982, the family traveled again to Fort Smith, Arkansas, where Dr. Vega served as a lead psychiatrist for the Cuban refugees who had fled oppression in the Mariel boatlift. In 1984, the family moved back to Puerto Rico, and Dr. Vega continued his long-standing professional career with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in the San Juan Regional Office. After 28 years, Dr. Vega retired as a distinguished medical professional for the VA in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Their devotion and love for one another has been witnessed by many and, has embodied one of the most important vows in marriage; "in sickness and in health." When Carmen Ana was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2010, it was not only her faith, bravery, and courageous attitude that got her through this life-threatening disease, but it was the loving care of her husband, and support of her doctors, friends, and family, that helped her defeat this devastating disease.

Dr. Felix Vega and Carmen Ana have two children, Felix, and Carmen, as well as four young grandchildren, Fabiana, Carlos Enrique, Felix Sebastian and Carmen Sofia. The entire family lives happily in Puerto Rico.

Please join me in giving Carmen Ana and Felix warmhearted congratulations on their 60th wedding anniversary. I commend them and wish them many more happy years together.

CONGRATULATING AUGUSTIN TELLEZ ON RECEIVING SONS OF ITALY FOUNDATION HUMANITARIAN AWARD

**HON. STENY H. HOYER**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 25, 2023*

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of my friend Augustin 'Augie' Tellez, who is this year's recipient of the Sons of Italy Foundation's Humanitarian Award. From his leadership in organized labor to his pride in his Italian heritage, Augie truly deserves this honor—as well as the gratitude of many people across Maryland and America.

Serving as the Executive Vice President of the Seafarers International Union (SIU) since 2005, Augie has been an important voice for mariners, boatmen, and fishermen across North America. He has a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities that people face in his industry. Augie's tenure with SIU began when he graduated from the Paul Hall Center's Lundberg School of Seamanship down in Piney Point, Maryland, in 1975. After five years of serving the union in several posts across the country, he rose through the

ranks to become port agent of SIU's headquarters port and later special assistant to the union's president. Trusting Augie's good judgement and inspiring leadership, the SIU executive board appointed him to serve as the union's vice president of contracts and contracts enforcement in 1991—a position that union membership reelected him to the following year. He served in that role until 2005, overseeing all the union's collective bargaining efforts. From helping develop the SIU's training record book to overseeing contract implementation for the union, he has made invaluable contributions to the SIU and continues to do so as Executive Vice President. His work isn't limited to the SIU, however.

Many government and industry leaders have sought out Augie's expertise and insight. He has served on the U.S. Transportation Command's Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement Executive Working Group (EWG) for over two decades, fostering closer cooperation between the federal government and his industry to ensure that the U.S. military has access to vital commercial shipping resources in the event of an emergency deployment. Similarly, between 2011 and 2022, Augie served on the U.S. Transportation Department's Marine Transportation National Advisory Council. As chair of the council's U.S. Maritime Workforce Working Group Subcommittee, he helped assess how the nation's mariner workforce could support the American merchant fleet during national emergencies. Indeed, the recent COVID-19 pandemic reminded us of the vital importance of maintaining strong supply chains, and Augie has played an important role in that effort.

I've also been grateful for all that Augie has done for our community in Southern Maryland. He has served as a trustee for the Paul Hall Center and as chair of its advisory board for years. He was instrumental in securing key expansions to the school. That includes the Joseph Sacco Fire Fighting and Safety School, which provides maritime firefighting training, and a cutting-edge facility with a variety of simulators that help seafarers develop important shiphandling skills and learn industry procedures. Thanks in part to Augie's efforts, Paul Hall Center now offers more U.S. Coast Guard-approved training courses than any other school in America, providing a first-rate education to its students and graduating some of the world's best merchant mariners year after year. We are so lucky to have this esteemed institution in Southern Maryland and to have leaders like Augie who help run it.

It's been a pleasure to know Augie all these years. From preserving America's maritime traditions to protecting workers' rights, he continues to do crucial work on behalf of our state and Nation. I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating Augie on this award and in thanking him for all that he has done for our country and its mariners.

RECOGNIZING GENE OVERHOLT'S SERVICE TO THE CITY OF PLYMOUTH AND TO THE NATION

**HON. DEBBIE DINGELL**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 25, 2023*

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Gene Overholt, a veteran of the

Second World War and a longtime resident of Plymouth, Michigan, on the occasion of his passing. His service to the nation and dedication to his community over 99 years of life is worthy of commendation.

Gene was born in the small town of Bippus, Indiana in 1924, before moving to Huntington, Indiana. He and his wife, Jane, were childhood sweethearts and began dating at the age of 13. He joined the armed forces as soon as he was of age, where he was trained as a "telephone man". On the battlefield, Gene served by running communication channels, culminating in his participation in the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944/45.

He came home and began work at Michigan Bell, where he would spend the rest of his career. He and his wife Jane raised their three daughters in Plymouth, Michigan, and though he was done with his military service, his service to his community was just beginning. Gene was one of the founding members of the Kiwanis Club of Colonial Plymouth, and eventually was elected as the President of Kiwanis International in 1988–89. In 1962, Gene assisted in the creation of the Plymouth Salvation Army, where he served on the Board until his passing earlier this year. He also spent a decade on the Plymouth Township Board of Trustees and was eventually inducted into the Plymouth Hall of Fame. In honor of his three daughters, all of whom taught in the Plymouth-Canton Community Schools, Gene founded the Gene and Jane Overholt Educational Scholarship Foundation. This foundation, which gives scholarships to students going into the field of education or other service professions, will carry on Gene's legacy for decades to come.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in celebrating Gene Overholt's life of service to our country and to his community. Though he is no longer with us, his legacy of service will live on through his daughters, his foundation, and the indelible impression he has left upon his city. I thank Gene.

CONGRATULATING PRESIDENT-ELECT SANTIAGO PEÑA PALACIOS

**HON. JOE WILSON**

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 25, 2023*

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the American people extend congratulations to the Honorable Santiago Peña Palacios on being elected to the Presidency of Paraguay on May 2nd. His success as a former member of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Paraguay and former Minister of Finance of Paraguay demonstrates his ability to be a great leader. I am grateful for his dedicated work on anti-corruption, equal application of law, and advancing security, and economic growth for the benefit of both our countries creating jobs.

The United States established diplomatic relations with Paraguay in 1861, 50 years after Paraguay declared independence from Spain. The longstanding relationship of our nations is characterized by cooperation, shared interests, and a strong bilateral trade relationship. The history of Paraguay as an independent nation has been marked by political upheavals, but in 1989, it underwent a transition to civilian leadership and democratic elections, which the United States supported.

Paraguay has been a valued ally in addressing regional challenges, such as the crisis in Venezuela, counternarcotics efforts, intellectual property rights protection, and combating illicit activities such as money laundering and human trafficking. Paraguayan commitment to combating illegal activity in the tri-border area and participating in anti-terrorism training demonstrates its dedication to regional security. I am confident President-elect Palacios, upon assuming office on August 15th, will effectively lead Paraguay and carry forward the positive momentum achieved thus far.

I am grateful for the commitment of the President-elect to continue to strengthen the historic ties between Paraguay and Taiwan, as diplomatic relations date back more than six decades.

Amidst pressure from the Chinese Communist Party, Taiwan continues to face adversities to keep their allies who acknowledge them as a sovereign nation. It is important that the United States and Paraguay remain devoted to our unwavering support of Taiwan. Paraguay stands with democracies promoting rule of law being opposed by authoritarians imposing rule of gun.

Paraguay is well represented in the United States by dynamic Ambassador José Antonio Dos Santos.

#### DEBT LIMIT

**HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.**

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 25, 2023*

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, one of the cardinal rules of negotiation is never to negotiate when you have a gun pointed at your head. The rationale is self-evident. One of the parties—namely, the party which is staring down the barrel of the gun—is more than likely going to either get the short end of the deal or, worse, end up dead.

In the case of the debt limit negotiations currently underway between President Biden and Speaker McCARTHY, the risk isn't just that one of the parties will be unhappy with an agreement. If the United States defaults on the federal debt for the first time in the nation's history, it will risk a devastating wound to financial markets at home and around the world, push our country into a recession, erase 7.8 million jobs, and wipe out as much as \$10 trillion in household wealth.

The crisis, of course, is a manufactured one. The national debt has increased under every presidential administration since Herbert Hoover. According to the U.S. Department of Treasury, Congress has acted 78 separate times to permanently raise, temporarily extend, or revise the definition of the debt limit—49 times under Republican presidents and 29 times under Democratic presidents.

Republicans aren't interested in getting our fiscal house in order. They don't want to address entitlement programs, which are the big drivers of projected spending growth. They don't want to touch raising revenues or cuts to military spending.

Instead, Republicans are aiming their weapon at nondefense discretionary spending. They want to slash funding for our nation's schools, our national parks, our farmers, and

our police officers. Nondefense discretionary spending only accounts for 15 percent of the \$6.3 trillion the government is expected to spend this year.

Republicans even want to take money away from health care for our nation's veterans. Their Default on America Act would underfund programs that help our veterans exposed to burn pits by \$20 billion.

America must pay its bills as it has always done. At a time when America is facing many challenges at home and abroad—from inflation to competition with China to the ongoing war in Ukraine—we must ensure that our word is trusted. In the end, we must do what is right and raise the debt ceiling without any conditions and especially without a gun pointed at our heads.

#### MAGA REPUBLICANS DEFAULT ON AMERICA

**HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 25, 2023*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise to demand that Republicans fulfill their job and pay America's bills.

House Republicans have rushed out of town knowing that they are essentially forcing a default that will be extremely expensive for families.

We know what comes next: unemployment will double, retirement savings will be lost, and costs for everything from mortgages to vehicle payments will increase.

Extreme MAGA Republicans, though, are still to blame for America's current economic disaster. They have departed town, leaving behind working families.

Democrats have come together to resolve the debt without playing political games. Republicans who identify as "moderate" cannot hide. Either they side with Team Extreme, or they join us to end this crisis.

#### HALT ALL LETHAL TRAFFICKING OF FENTANYL ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 24, 2023*

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Chair, I rise in opposition to H.R. 467, the HALT Fentanyl Act.

Mr. Chair, this bill is not a solution to the proliferation of Fentanyl Related Substances (FRS) in America. We need legislation that will actually save lives while stopping illicit drug sales.

There are lifesaving, bipartisan bills like the SAFE Act, introduced by my colleague, Representative PAPPAS, that work with the medical community to protect medically beneficial FRSs. The SAFE Act also prevents harmful mandatory minimum sentences for people who may not even know they have a Fentanyl Related Substance in their possession. These are necessary guardrails that Republicans' HALT Fentanyl Act fails to include.

Congress should not be playing doctor, but instead pass a comprehensive bill that reflects

the input of medical professionals, addiction specialists, researchers, and law enforcement. Republicans are trying to present a "quick and easy" solution to a complex problem.

#### A TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL CLAIRE

**HON. KEVIN MULLIN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 25, 2023*

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Mike Claire, Chancellor of the San Mateo County Community College District, upon his retirement after 34 years of dedicated service to our community.

Mike Claire joined the faculty at College of San Mateo in 1988 after working for a major public accounting firm, and just eight years after enrolling as a student at Canada College in Redwood City, and earning a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a Master in Business Administration degrees from California State University, East Bay. During his time as a faculty member, Mike Claire represented the Academic Senate on many college committees and served as chair of College of San Mateo's Curriculum Committee.

In 1997, Mike Claire was appointed as Dean of the Technology Division at College of San Mateo and he worked with faculty and staff to support the development of several new career and technical education programs including Digital Media, Network Cabling, Instrumentation and Process Control Systems, new curriculum for the College's apprenticeship programs, a Paramedic Apprenticeship Program, and a full POST-certified police academy.

Mike Claire served as the Vice President of Instruction at College of San Mateo from 2005 to 2006, and during that time, he worked with instructional deans to support new curriculum development, with faculty to develop the college's initial policies concerning the use of faculty computers and other technologies, and with high school and college stakeholders to expand the Middle College High School program.

In January 2007, Mike Claire was appointed as President of College of San Mateo and worked with stakeholders to guide the college through two successful accreditation visits. He currently serves as a Commissioner on the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). In addition, Mike Claire worked with college constituencies to develop several programs designed for underserved students, including learning communities and other programs that provide direct support to students. Mike Claire oversaw approximately \$350 million of new construction and renovation for the College of San Mateo campus. During his tenure, College of San Mateo was recognized as an Aspen Top 150 College, making the College eligible to compete for the prestigious Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence.

In August 2019, Mike Claire was appointed as the Acting Chancellor of the San Mateo County Community College District, and as Interim Chancellor of the District in September 2019, serving in that capacity until his appointment as Chancellor in July 2020. Mike Claire skillfully guided the District and its three colleges through both internal and external challenges, most notably ensuring the District's