

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF BARBARA LACEN KELLER

HON. TROY A. CARTER

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 26, 2023

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of New Orleans culture bearer and activist, Barbara Lacen Keller who passed away following a brief illness at the age of 76. New Orleans has lost one of its greatest champions of culture. Barbara was always leading the fight for the rights of our musicians and culture bearers. She left a legacy worthy to be celebrated and remembered for generations to come. She was also involved in politics, to improve the lives of people in New Orleans and across the country. For many years she worked for the City of New Orleans, as the Director of Constituent Services for Council District B Councilwoman Stacey Head, and later in Mayor LaToya Cantrell's Office of Cultural Economy, where she retired in 2020. She was fondly nicknamed "the Mayor of Central City", for all her work in that neighborhood. In 2012 she proudly served as a Barack Obama delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, NC. She was a Mellon Community Fellow at Tulane University, mentoring graduate students in community relations.

Barbara was a very active figure in New Orleans' cultural community, including serving on the boards for the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans and the Dryades YMCA, where she was currently serving as President of the Board of Dryades YMCA, New Orleans, Louisiana, leading the transition and operational restructuring of 115-year-old community anchor organization. She was an original member of the Lady Buckjumpers, and a founding member of the New Orleans Social Aid & Pleasure Club Task Force. Barbara was a charter member of the Femme Fatale Mardi Gras krewe, serving as one of the first float captains, and was currently serving as chaplain.

She had been a valued member of the Board of Directors of WWOZ since 2021 where she will be remembered as a Guardian Angel overlooking the Guardians of the Groove, advocating for culture bearers and musicians in our city; and of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation, where she was elected to the Advisory Council in 2016, and onto the Board of the Foundation in 2019, serving as Chair of the Advocacy and Equity Committee and its Gala Committee.

Barbara's mother was Augustine "Miss Teen" Germaine Lewis, who in the 1940s was the only Spy Girl Mardi Gras Indian in New Orleans. In the 1950s, Barbara herself masked as the Little Queen of the Cheyenne tribe.

Barbara was raised on Villere Street in Tremé, and attended Joseph A. Craig Elementary School, Andrew J. Bell Junior High School, and Joseph S. Clark Sr. High School,

followed by Southern University at New Orleans. She was also a proud honorary member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. Barbara's Honors, Awards and Appointments are beyond numerous to mention them all.

Other civic involvement included:

Israelite Baptist Church, Pastor Support & Youth Ministries, Governmental Liaison, Mass Choir

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Member

Black Organization for Leadership Development, Member

Great Expectations Inc., Past Board Member and Treasurer

City of New Orleans Enterprise Congress, Member

National Council of Negro Women, Member
New Orleans Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force, Founder

Central City Partnership, Co-Founder and Chairperson

Café Reconcile, New Orleans Board of Directors, Past Chair

New Orleans Council on Aging, Board of Directors

Gathering of the Sisters, Founder
City of New Orleans, Master Plan Advisory Committee, Districts 25 & 26, Subcommittee Chairperson

Armstrong Family Services, Board of Directors, Past Chair

Urban League, Member
Independent Women's Organization, Membership & Endorsement Committees

Orleans Parish Democratic Executive Committee, Member

Democratic State Central Committee, District 103, Member

National Slave Ship Museum, Vice Chair
Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc., Member

Original New Orleans Lady Buck Jumpers, Member

American Heart Association, Go Red Women Luncheon, 2011 Co-Chair

Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday Commission, Co-Chair

Tremé/7th Ward Cultural District, Sponsorship Coordinator, Festival Co-Producer

Preservation Resource Committee, Board of Directors, Chair of Multicultural Heritage Committee, Chair

The "Lacen" part of her name came from her marriage to Anthony "Tuba Fats" Lacen, one of New Orleans' most famous musicians, who was also Wild Man of the Wild Magnolias Mardi Gras Indian Tribe. Their August 1980 wedding in Armstrong Park was the first wedding to take place in the park. Tuba Fats passed in 2004.

Barbara's 1 son, Gene Bentley predeceased her in November of 2022. She is survived by the gems of her eyes, 3 daughters—Dawn Bentley-Johnson, Kelly Bentley Dixon and Cantina Rankins; 4 beautiful grandchildren—Zihara Rankins, Michael Brooks, Jr., Jelani Robinson, and Alicia Green; and 1 adorable great-grandchild.

I am humbled to have personally known such a great culture bearer and fighter for all, who has done so much to improve the lives of countless residents across my district. So many people's lives are enriched because of the love and passion she expressed in touching them along the way. While the grieving

process never truly ends, I pray that the day will come when her memory brings a smile to her family and friends' faces before it brings a tear to their eyes.

REMEMBERING LEROY ELFMAN

HON. TOM EMMER

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 26, 2023

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of LeRoy Edwin Elfmann, who passed away on January 6th of this year.

From humble beginnings on a dairy farm in Maple Lake, Minnesota, LeRoy set out to live a life of service. After graduating from Maple Lake High School in 1968, he enlisted in the United States Army. LeRoy served in the Army for more than 20 years, and his service took him all over the world. After serving his country on deployment in Guam, Cambodia, Hungary, and Finland, he was honorably discharged after rising to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 3.

However, LeRoy's service to his country did not end after his military career did. After more than 20 years in the armed forces, LeRoy joined the Defense Intelligence Agency. While there, he served as a trusted representative of the United States, advocating for our great nation around the world on intelligence and security concerns.

LeRoy was involved in many high-profile intelligence operations, including the capture of Ana Montes, a spy who infiltrated the Defense Intelligence Agency and spied on behalf of the Cuban government for 17 years. With LeRoy's help, Ms. Montes was arrested in September of 2001 and charged with conspiracy to commit espionage. She eventually pled guilty and was sentenced to a 25-year prison term. In recognition of his more than 36 years of service to the agency, LeRoy was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Director of National Intelligence.

His distinguished career with the Defense Intelligence Agency took him to more than 67 countries. During one of these trips, he met his beloved wife, Mary. They were married in Singapore, where they met, in February 1977.

Between overseas trips, the couple made their home in Arlington, Virginia until their retirement in 2011. During retirement, Mary and LeRoy were heavily involved in their community and stayed active through their membership in a square-dancing club in Monticello, the County Line Squares. Together, they participated in many square-dancing events in Minnesota and attended numerous square-dancing conventions around the United States. LeRoy also held multiple leadership positions in the state-wide organization, Square Dance Minnesota.

When they weren't square dancing or traveling together, Mary and LeRoy enjoyed spending time on the farm, planting and harvesting crops with their nephews. LeRoy also

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

spent free time organizing and tracing his family's genealogy.

LeRoy dedicated his life to the service of his country and leaves behind a tremendous legacy. He will be dearly missed. We offer our sincerest condolences to Mary and the rest of the Elfmann family, and pray LeRoy's memory will comfort them during this difficult time.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BRADLEY SCOTT SCHNEIDER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 26, 2023

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today regarding votes I missed on January 24 and 25, 2023. I was not in Washington, D.C. on these dates due to the death of my father and subsequent mourning period. Had I been present, I would have voted as follows:

Roll Call No. 32 on H.R. 159, the Chance to Compete Act of 2023, I would have voted yes. The bill enjoys strong bipartisan support to make our federal government more efficient.

Roll Call No. 33 on H.R. 300, the Settlement Agreement Information Database Act of 2023, I would have voted yes. The bill enjoys strong bipartisan support to make our federal government more transparent.

Roll Call No. 34 on H.R. 346, the NOTAM Improvement Act of 2023, I would have voted yes. The bill enjoys strong bipartisan support to make American aviation stronger, safer, and more reliable.

Roll Call No. 35 on H.R. 400, the Investing in Main Street Act of 2023, I would have voted yes. The bill enjoys strong bipartisan support to make American businesses stronger.

Lastly, Roll Call No. 36 on H. Con. Res. 7, Commending the Bravery, Courage, and Resolve of the Women and Men of Iran Demonstrating in More Than 133 Cities and Risking Their Safety to Speak Out Against the Iranian Regime's Human Rights Abuses, I would have voted yes. I am a cosponsor of the resolution, which enjoys strong bipartisan support.

HONORING 'ALFIE' ALVARADO-RAMOS

HON. DEREK KILMER

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 26, 2023

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my sincerest congratulations and to wish a happy retirement to one of my constituents and a longtime friend, 'Alfie' Alvarado-Ramos. Alfie is celebrating her retirement after a lifetime of service.

Alfie was born in Puerto Rico and served 22 years on active duty retiring as the Command Sergeant Major of Madigan Army Medical Center and Troop Command, Joint Base Lewis McChord.

Alfie Alvarado-Ramos joined the Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs (WDVA) in 1993 as the Associate Superintendent of the Washington Soldiers Home. She then became the Superintendent of the Washington Veterans Home, where she later served as the agency's Assistant Director and Deputy Director before Gov. Jay Inslee appointed her as Director in 2013.

She established new programs and services to meet the needs of Washington's veterans and their families—from opening the new State Veterans Home in Walla Walla in 2017 to creating new programs to serve military spouses and LGBTQ+ veterans. In recent years, Alvarado-Ramos worked with state elected officials and leaders to create a framework for suicide prevention efforts statewide, and most recently unveiled a 988-suicide prevention emblem to generate awareness for the 988 Crisis Lifeline.

Alfie is the recipient of the Army Legion of Merit Medal and Military Order of Medical Merit and state and national awards that include the Governor's Distinguished Management Leadership Award and the Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary's Leadership Award. She is currently serving as executive member of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs and National Association of State Veterans Home.

In addition to her work in our community, Alfie's passion for ensuring women veterans have a voice in the veteran's community has resulted in annual women veterans' conferences, monthly learning sessions, and Washington State's participation in the I Am Not Invisible Campaign.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor today to celebrate Alfie Alvarado-Ramos on her retirement. Her extraordinary leadership and love for her community has never wavered. She has made a tremendous difference in the state of Washington. Her service to our country and community is greatly appreciated and will be long remembered.

RECOGNIZING THE CAREER AND SERVICE OF SHERIFF MARK WIEGERT

HON. MIKE GALLAGHER

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 26, 2023

Mr. GALLAGHER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor the career of retiring Calumet County Sheriff Mark Wiegert. Throughout Sheriff Wiegert's 31 years in law enforcement, he has proven to be a remarkable leader and mentor to those in his department. Beginning as a part-time officer in Brillion and Valders, Sheriff Wiegert has obtained immense knowledge while serving in different capacities and departments in law enforcement, including as a sergeant in the investigative division and a lieutenant managing the jail and investigations. The many positions he held along the way surely played a role in obtaining his most recent leadership position, Sheriff of Calumet County. I commend Sheriff Wiegert's unwavering service for the past 31 years to the people of Calumet County and Northeast Wisconsin.

During his time leading the Calumet County Sheriff's Office, Sheriff Wiegert was committed to ensuring that the department expand while also identifying ways to better serve the community. While in office, Sheriff Wiegert oversaw the \$35 million project to build the new sheriffs office and jail. In addition to the building expansion, the department added new positions, a swearing-in ceremony for officers, and a wellness committee that assists officers in navigating mental health challenges. In recognition of Sheriff Wiegert's efforts, he has re-

ceived several awards, including the Wisconsin Officer of the Year Award and the Outstanding Victim Advocate Award from the Wisconsin Association of Homicide Investigators. It is evident through these many accolades that Sheriff Wiegert has committed himself to serving the people of Calumet County with a sense of duty and integrity.

Mr. Speaker, today the people of Northeast Wisconsin thank Sheriff Wiegert for his extraordinary service and commitment to his community. Sheriff Wiegert will surely be missed, but I wish him all the best in his well-deserved retirement.

GUAM-NORTHERN MARIANAS EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT OF THE GUARD AND RESERVE 25TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN

OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 26, 2023

Mr. SABLAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Guam-Northern Marianas Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) for 25 years of valued service supporting our islands' service men and women seeking civilian employment. Since 1997, the Guam-Northern Marianas ESGR has been instrumental in connecting our islands' National Guard and Reserve members with employers that understand and cooperate with one's commitment to military service. Supportive employers are critical to maintaining the strength and readiness of our Nation's Guard and Reserve units, should they be called upon for duty or disaster emergencies.

The Army National Guard, the Air National Guard, the Army Reserve, the Air Force Reserve, the Navy Reserve, the Marine Corps Reserve, and the Coast Guard Reserve are on the frontlines of securing our Nation from threats around the world. In fact, the National Guard and Reserve forces comprise nearly half of our U.S. military strength. Recently, Reserve Component forces have been activated across America to assist efforts to respond to, mitigate, and control the COVID-19 pandemic. And, with more than 2,700 service members on Guam, Saipan, Rota, and Tinian, Guam and the Marianas enjoy the highest Reserve membership per capita anywhere in the United States.

That is why the work of Guam-Northern Marianas ESGR is so important to supporting the well-being of our islands and our Nation. Our service men and women make tremendous sacrifices answering the call to serve, as do their employers whose deployed Guard and Reserve members can no longer offer their skills and services for months at a time. Yet because of ESGR, these service members are comforted by the knowledge of job security upon returning home and their employers are rewarded with a uniquely dedicated workforce.

I urge my colleagues to join me in thanking and celebrating Guam-Northern Marianas ESGR for their exceptional service and commitment to our islands' service men and women.