

Lokesh Muni Ji. For the last 30 years, Acharya Lokeshji has been an advocate for communal harmony, non-violence, peace, and mutual co-operation.

Born in 1961 in northwest India, Acharya Lokeshji studied Jain, Buddhist, and Vedic philosophy from an early age, and left home at the age of 22 to take initiation into Jainism. After receiving the title of Acharya, one of the highest honors in Jainism, Acharya Lokeshji travelled the world and authored dozens of books to reflect on the principles of religious harmony and unity in diversity. He is also outspoken on critical issues such as environmental protection and substance use disorder.

Acharya Lokeshji's brave actions back up his doctrine of non-violence. In 2013, while on a tour of London, he rushed back to India to assist victims of a deadly riot between Hindus and Muslims. Prior to that, he resolved a Sikh religious dispute in the Punjab region of India. As a capstone to his initiatives, Acharya Lokeshji also recently dedicated India's first 'World Peace Center' in Gurugram, one of the country's largest cities. These examples all serve as a testament of Acharya Lokeshji's ability to put his principles into practice.

We are all grateful for Acharya Lokeshji's dedication to interfaith dialogue and peace. His selfless service is an incredible example of global citizenship, and we wish him success in his continued work.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

#### HON. KWEISI MFUME

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Speaker, on September 12, 2023, I did not arrive in Washington in time for the vote on H.R. 1567—ACRES Act, as amended, and H.R. 3324—To extend the authority to collect Shasta-Trinity Marina fees through fiscal year 2029. I missed both votes because I was in attendance and speaking at the funeral for Lawrence Lacks, Sr., the last living child of the late Henrietta Lacks, the mother of the medically famous HeLa cell, and a former neighbor of mine in my youth. Had I been in D.C., my vote would have been YEA on H.R. 1567, Roll Call No. 386, and YEA on H.R. 3324, Roll Call No. 387.

#### HONORING BOB KNAPP

#### HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding contributions and tireless dedication of Mr. Bob Knapp, a distinguished individual, devoted advocate, and community leader in Colorado.

Mr. Knapp has exemplified exceptional commitment to his community and has been an integral part of various organizations dedicated to improving the lives of retired Americans, advancing the cause of democracy, and promoting the rights of American workers.

Mr. Knapp's contributions include co-founding the Colorado Chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans. For 2 decades, he served

as its Secretary, working to ensure the needs and concerns of retired Americans were addressed and advocating for policies that enhanced their quality of life.

Perhaps one of Mr. Knapp's most remarkable achievements is his service on the AFL-CIO Executive Board for over 30 years. His long-standing commitment to the AFL-CIO has been marked by strong leadership and dedication to American workers.

Throughout the past 20 years, Mr. Knapp has provided strong leadership, demonstrating an ability to keep everyone on track and focused on achieving their goals. His dedication and his tireless efforts on behalf of the community are an inspiration to us all.

In recognition of his outstanding service and important contributions, I extend a heartfelt thank you and congratulations to Bob Knapp on behalf of Colorado's 7th Congressional District. His legacy will inspire generations to come.

#### HONORING WALTER ATKINS

#### HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable hero, Walter L. Atkins, Jr.

Walter L. Atkins, Jr. was born November 10, 1972, to Mr. and Mrs. Walter L. Atkins, Sr. in Clarksdale, MS. He was the first born of 4 children. In 1978, he moved to Darling, MS and resided there until 1990 with his parents and siblings.

Walter attended Falcon Elementary School and furthered his education by attending Quitman County High School and graduated in 1990. Walter joined the United States Army Reserve in 1989. Upon completion of his Basic and Advanced Individual Trainings, he furthered his education by attending Alcorn State University from 1991 to 1998. There he received his Bachelor of Science and Master of Secondary Education in Biological Sciences. During his freshman year of college, tragedy struck with the sudden death of his mother.

Walter began his educational profession in the South Delta School District, where he served as a science teacher for 5 years. He left the profession for 3 years to pursue a career in auto sales. Fortunately, he returned to the profession that he so loved 3 years later in the Leland School District. In 2011, he joined the Drew School District where he served as a high school science teacher. The following year, the district consolidated with the Sunflower County School District to form the newly formed Sunflower County Consolidated School District. Walter left the classroom in hopes of becoming an administrator.

In 2012, he served as an assistant principal and shortly after principal of R.H. Bearden Elementary School in the West Tallahatchie School District. In 2016, he returned to his home county, where he took the position as high school principal of (formerly known as Quitman County High School) Madison S. Palmer High. Upon returning, he was given the task of raising the graduation rate to 95 percent. In 2020, the district was recognized by MDE for its 95.7 percent graduation rate

which placed the Quitman County School District in the top 10 of all school districts within the state of Mississippi.

In addition, he spearheaded and began a College Prep initiative that took the financial burden of paying for college courses from the parents. He served in that capacity for 6 years where the school made many educational strides and received recognition from MDE for its academic successes. He currently serves as the district's Director of Curriculum and Instructional Management. Walter is the proud father of 2 sons—D'Kedrianane and Jeremy, and has 2 grandchildren that he enjoys spending time with.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Walter L. Atkins, Jr., for he is a reflection of a hero.

#### IN MEMORY OF BILL RICHARDSON

#### HON. TERESA LEGER FERNANDEZ

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Mr. Speaker, last week, the enchanted State of New Mexico, the United States and families seeking justice everywhere lost a statesman, a former Ambassador, Governor and Congressman.

Governor Bill Richardson is survived by our former First Lady of incredible grace, Mrs. Barbara Richardson.

In 1983, Governor Richardson began his public service career as the first Representative of the newly formed 3rd Congressional district. I stand on his shoulders, and am grateful for his sage advice on how to best serve this district.

As Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus he opposed cruel immigration policies and brought attention to Latino policy priorities.

As Governor, he recognized the importance of education and economic diversity as he raised teacher salaries and increased film production.

May we honor Richardson as a tenacious champion for New Mexicans, skillful diplomat and a committed public servant.

I include in the RECORD Linda Lynch's story on how Richardson rescued her husband held hostage.

17 years ago, this month, I flew to Khartoum with the late Governor Bill Richardson.

The mission was to free my husband, Paul Salopek, a journalist, from captivity in Sudan, along with his translator, Suleiman Moussa, and driver, Idriss Anu. Paul was reporting a story for National Geographic magazine when they were abducted on the western border of Sudan. On August 6, 2006, they disappeared for 10 days. When they surfaced, they had been traded for a box of uniforms and turned over to the Sudanese government. They were flown by helicopter deep into Darfur, separated, imprisoned, and charged by the government with "espionage, passing information illegally, and reporting false news."

I will never forget the day Governor Richardson telephoned me at home in Columbus, New Mexico offering help. At that time, I, together with Paul's editors at National Geographic and the Chicago Tribune, had scrambled to locate Paul and were grappling with how to get them out. Over the course of days, we worked an intricate web of contacts

and communications, 3:00 a.m. conference calls, check-ins with the State Department and congressional members. We also dispatched a message to the Governor that one of his constituents had been imprisoned in Sudan. Immediately, Governor Richardson picked up the phone and called me.

In that watershed moment, everything changed. Bill Richardson began his unique methodical and deliberate steps to bring Paul home. Unintimidated by despots or warlords, the Governor saw Paul in a familiar situation that he had adroitly handled before. Watching him in those urgent days that culminated in our flight to Khartoum, it became clear that he had a rare gift of intelligence, diplomacy, and magic. He never took a single success for granted, and it was his respect for the “stardust”—the alignment of the seemingly impossible—that made it all work.

It was 34 days before Paul, Suleiman, and Idriss would see their freedom, a shorter time fortunately than many others detained have endured, but every bit as vivid and terrifying and dangerous.

The day we crossed into north African air space I remember looking out over the vast sand of the Sahara while everyone slept, the anxiety of what would transpire more palpable as we approached Khartoum. As soon as we disembarked the Governor was whisked away to meet with President Umar Al-Bashir. Three hours later Governor Richardson emerged with a “Pardon” for Paul based on humanitarian grounds.

But Paul was not in Khartoum. He was 489 miles away. We would have to fly there to rescue him.

After a tense and uneasy night, the next morning we boarded a smaller aircraft and flew two hours into Darfur, a province ripped apart by arson and genocide. There, we waited all day. The provincial governor of Darfur was unhappy. He had not been consulted before the president pardoned Paul. I watched as Governor Richardson went to work again soothing the irritation, Paul, Suleiman, and Idriss were put through a 15-minute mock trial where their charges were read aloud. They were admonished but ultimately released. Governor Richardson had worked his magic again.

We returned to Khartoum at dusk with our prize of three and left several hours later for New Mexico with Paul. Suleiman and Idriss were reunited with their families in Chad. The whole excursion took only 48 hours.

For all the admirable things Governor Richardson accomplished in his distinguished lifetime of public service, I believe it was his extraordinary diplomacy that he would most want to be remembered for, that, and the stardust that so often aligned for and with him.

#### RECOGNIZING ELIZABETH FUNCHESS, EAGLE SCOUT

#### HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Elizabeth Funchess. Elizabeth is a very special young woman who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 8G, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

The multiyear journey to the Eagle Scout Award is one of the most involved and trans-

formative experiences a young person can have. They try new things through the merit badge program, develop confidence in the outdoors, practice leadership tactics, and plan, develop and give leadership to a service project that benefits their community. For Elizabeth's Eagle Scout service project, she, built 2 picnic tables that convert into benches for her church to have an outdoor classroom.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Elizabeth Funchess for her accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for her efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

#### COMMENDING DIVISION CHIEF KEVIN RITTENHOUSE FOR EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE DURING HURRICANE IDALIA

#### HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my commendation for the outstanding performance displayed by Division Chief of Training Kevin Rittenhouse during Hurricane Idalia. His dedication and exemplary efforts went above and beyond the call of duty.

In the face of extreme adversity, Chief Rittenhouse demonstrated exceptional leadership, ensuring the safety and well-being of both his team and the affected community. His quick thinking and decisive action played a pivotal role in mitigating potential hazards and securing vital resources. Chief Rittenhouse was the area incident commander for the Hernando Beach area as storm surge was rising, structure fires were difficult to access due to flooding, and high-water rescues were being performed. Simultaneously, Chief Rittenhouse's home was being damaged by storm surge waters.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I acknowledge Kevin's exceptional performance. We are immensely grateful for his invaluable contributions during this critical time. His actions embody the highest standards of professionalism and serve as an inspiration to us all.

#### HONORING THE SERVICE OF FORMER MARYLAND CONGRESSMAN ROSCOE BARTLETT

#### HON. DAVID J. TRONE

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mr. TRONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the service of Congressman Roscoe Bartlett, who faithfully represented Maryland's 6th Congressional District for 2 decades, from 1993 to 2013.

As one of the longest-serving representatives in Maryland history, Congressman Bartlett and I have shared the honor of representing Western Maryland in the U.S. House of Representatives.

And while our politics differ, one of Congressman Bartlett's efforts that I strongly commend was to expand green energy and fight against climate change. As former Leader STENY HOYER once said, “Roscoe was green before it was cool to be green.”

Congressman Bartlett embodies the spirit of a true self-made American. Born a few years before the Great Depression and raised on a tenant farm in Western Pennsylvania, he persevered to become an engineer for the U.S. Navy, earn a Ph.D. in physiology, and serve as a Member of Congress. Beyond his congressional service, he is a loving husband and a devoted father of 10.

Today, we thank Congressman Bartlett for his service to this Nation.

#### RECOGNIZING JULY CONSTITUENT OF THE MONTH MATTHEW REBELO

#### HON. MIKE LEVIN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, it is my great honor to recognize Carlsbad resident and attorney Matthew Rebelo as my July Constituent of the Month. In his work assisting Afghan refugees through the legal challenges of gaining asylum, Matthew embodies the critical importance of supporting those who face violence—especially the women and children most often at risk.

For Matthew, this work is personal. In 2015 he immigrated to the United States from South Africa and relates his own experience with starting anew here to his desire to help others coming to the United States. A former barrister in South Africa, Matthew continued his legal career in the United States after obtaining his green card and passing the California bar exam. It's inspiring to witness Matthew's initiative in using his time and skills to assist on a pro bono basis those escaping the Taliban's violence.

I'm forever grateful to the members of our CA-49 community who dedicate their time and effort towards helping others in critical need. I'm proud to honor Matthew Rebelo as my July Constituent of the Month.

#### RECOGNIZING VICKI HELFER

#### HON. JASON CROW

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mr. CROW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of Vicki Helfer, recipient of the Colorado High School Counselor of the Year award.

As a counselor for Aurora Central High School, Vicki advises students to work through their assignments and supports them through the anxieties that come with graduating. Outside of her counselor responsibilities, she advocates on behalf of her students. Vicki has helped her students obtain gender-neutral bathrooms and has assisted in creating programs to support students whose first language is not English.

Vicki is a model mentor and an outstanding civilian. Her dedication to supporting our youth has undoubtedly led to the recognition she deserves. I congratulate Vicki for being named the Colorado High School Counselor of the Year and wish her continued success.