

CONGRATULATING GRACE  
VERGARA-MACTAL

**HON. SUSIE LEE**

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Ms. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Grace Vergara-Mactal, Executive Director of SEIU 1107, for her upcoming retirement and a career of service to Nevada.

Grace was born and raised in the Philippines where she earned her bachelor's degree and worked as a medical technician. Immigrating to the U.S. in 1989, her first job involved mopping floors for \$3.50 an hour, but she worked her way back into the health care field as a hospital lab technician. As a leader and organizer for her fellow lab workers, Grace was suspended from her job while circulating a petition. Undeterred, she pursued this activism, climbing from volunteer, to organizer, Organizing Director, Chief of Staff, and eventually leader of Local 1107.

As one of the foremost leaders of the labor movement, both in Nevada and across the country, Grace has been a tireless advocate for good jobs and quality services during her incredible 3-decade career. As Executive Director, she represents nearly 20,000 health care and public service workers across the state.

In this position, Grace has led with a commitment to mobilizing and empowering workers and families while fighting for economic, racial, and social justice. Her work focused on growing Local 1107, passing historic legislation, winning major contract battles, and building vital community coalitions. She also serves as Vice President and Executive Board Member of the Service Employees International Union, officer of the SEIU Asian Pacific Islander Caucus, and Executive Board Member of the Nevada AFL-CIO.

In addition to being an important union leader, Grace is a trailblazer in our community. As the first member of the AANHPI community to serve as an officer for Local 1107, she is an important representative for one of Nevada's fastest growing demographics. Grace has a particular dedication to developing and supporting worker leaders, especially workers of color in her leadership with SEIU Local 1107 and the Nevada AFL-CIO.

Grace often says that she will always be an organizer at heart, so I am confident that her retirement will not be the last that I see of her.

Mr. Speaker, please join me today in honoring Grace Vergara-Mactal on her outstanding service to Nevada and our Nation, and in congratulating Grace on her retirement.

THANKING MONET STRAUB FOR  
HER SERVICE TO KANSAS

**HON. JAKE LaTURNER**

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in appreciation for a member of my staff for her dedicated service to the people of Kansas. Monet Straub has been an invaluable member of my team since she joined my staff in 2017 when I was still serving as State Treasurer.

Monet has worked tirelessly as my Deputy District Director for the past 2½ years—helping thousands of Kansans from across the Second Congressional District navigate our federal agencies through high-quality and reliable constituent services.

From organizing the Topeka office to running Mobile office hours, Monet's dedication, patience, and hard work have been vital in ensuring the success of our district operation. Most importantly, Monet always put our constituents first and Kansans knew they could count on her to get the job done. I am grateful for Monet's positive attitude and dedication to service over these past 6 years. I wish her the very best and look forward to seeing her excel in her new endeavors.

RECOGNIZING THE CONSULATE OF  
MEXICO IN FRESNO

**HON. DAVID G. VALADAO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Consulate of Mexico in Fresno on the 213th Anniversary of the Independence of Mexico and thank them for their significant contributions to the Central Valley.

The Consulate of Mexico in Fresno opened in 1931 to support the needs of Mexican agricultural workers located in the Central Valley. The mission of the consulate is to help Mexican citizens assimilate into the community and advance their rights while residing in California. For nearly a century, those working in the consulate have been dedicated to that mission, providing invaluable assistance to local immigrants including identification services, health guidance, and educational opportunities. The consulate connects local immigrants with the services they need to thrive.

Through their Mobile Consulate, which travels to different cities across the Central Valley throughout the year, Mexican immigrants have greater access to the over 30 services the consulate provides. The consulate is also focused on the educational outcomes of Mexican students.

Last year alone, the consulate, in partnership with other local organizations, granted more than \$45,000 in scholarships to 30 college students pursuing careers in public health. On this day, as we celebrate the independence of the Mexican people, I want to recognize the incredible contributions Mexican immigrants have made to our communities in the Central Valley and across the nation. As the son of immigrants, I understand first-hand the perseverance, determination, and sacrifice of immigrants who come to the United States in search of greater opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives to join me in celebrating the 213th Anniversary of the Independence of Mexico and thanking the Consulate of Mexico in Fresno for their dedication to the well-being of our Mexican community.

HONORING WORLD-RENOWN CONSERVATIONIST, THEO PAGEL WITH AMERICAN HUMANE/GLOBAL HUMANE'S KIESSLING INTERNATIONAL PRIZE FOR SPECIES CONSERVATION

**HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize heroic efforts on behalf of wildlife worldwide. American Humane, the first and most experienced national humane organization, which was created in 1877 to ensure the safety, welfare, and well-being of animals, has awarded Prof. Theo Pagel, CEO of the Cologne Zoo in Germany with the 2023 Wolfgang Kiessling International Prize for Species Conservation. This award was created in honor of Wolfgang F. Kiessling, the founder of Loro Parque and global leader in conservation.

Prof. Theo Pagel has dedicated his life to ensuring the survival of countless species, and inspiring and educating generations of people. As the CEO of the Cologne Zoo, the former president of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and Chair of the Reverse the Red Committee of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Pagel has led significant change for animals both in the wild and in zoos. He was inspired at an early age by his father, also an animal lover, and started a breeding program in 1988 to save the endangered Bali Starling—a program he coordinated for nearly 20 years.

Pagel created sustainability strategies and guidelines for conservation education during his tenure as president of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. He approaches conservation through inspiring the public as well as leading high-level strategies on saving countless species from the very largest Asian Elephant to the smallest Asian songbird.

He has led a global charge to push back the effects of what scientists call a "Sixth Mass Extinction," with up to one million species at risk of disappearing forever.

Mr. Speaker, wildlife conservationists put the world first, wildlife first, the future first. They don't seek a hero's reward, a medal, or a prize. But they surely deserve it. Mr. Speaker, I ask today that we recognize the impact Theo Pagel has had on saving species, honor his work and acknowledge American Humane's Kiessling Prize as a way to shine a light on the important work of saving species for future generations to love.

CELEBRATING DAVID HECKER'S  
40+ YEARS BUILDING THE LABOR  
MOVEMENT

**HON. DEBBIE DINGELL**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize David Hecker, the President of AFT Michigan on the occasion of his retirement. The tireless work he has put in to ensure our state has a strong public school system and the teachers to staff it is worthy of commendation.

David was born in the Bronx to a family of strong Polish roots. Both parents were proud union members and like many Jews of the era, were supporters of progressive politics. David and his wife, Alice Audie-Figueroa, who is also a well-known activist, are longtime members of Shir Tikvah in Troy.

Aimed with a Masters degree from the University of Massachusetts and a PhD from University of Wisconsin, David began his work in labor when he joined Local 3220 in 1977, the union of graduate assistants at University of Wisconsin. After being elected president, David decided that building the labor movement would be his life's work. Subsequent experience with the Allied Industrial Workers, Michigan State AFL-CIO, and the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO led to David taking a position at AFT Michigan, where he was eventually elected president in 2001. Since 2004, he has also been the Vice President of the National AFT.

David spent his time as President of AFT Michigan aggressively promoting the ideal that "K-12 public education is the foundation of our democracy". During his tenure, AFT Michigan organized many new locals representing thousands of new members and built deep partnerships with community allies. Notably, David was one of the co-chairs of the Coalition for the Future of Detroit School Children. This Coalition's report and legislative work resulted in legislation that saved the future of the Detroit Public Schools. David is also a co-chair of the Metropolitan Affairs Coalition, a group of leaders brought together from business, labor, and the government to the same table to respond to our region's challenges and opportunities. No matter where he is, David is always working to bring people of all perspectives together to reach common goals that improve our region for all who live here.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in celebrating the lifetime of work David Hecker has contributed to the cause of public education. Within our state and around the country, children in our public schools have quality educators and better access to resources due in no small part to his tireless efforts. We are saddened to see him leave, but we know his activism will not stop in "retirement". I thank David for his significant contributions.

#### RECOGNIZING THE 112TH NATIONAL DAY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN)

#### HON. SCOTT PERRY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, I'm honored to recognize the 112th National Day of the Republic of China (Taiwan).

I join all those celebrating this Day, memorializing the beginning of the Wuchang Uprising on October 10, 1911 that led to the collapse of the long-reigning imperial Qing Dynasty and foundation of the Republic of China on January 1, 1912.

Chinese Americans are a vital, valued, and vibrant community not only in my legislative district, but throughout our United States. I wish them and all observing this occasion, Godspeed, and a safe, happy, and momentous celebration.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Pennsylvania's 10th Congressional District, I'm privileged, humbled, and honored to commemorate the 112th National Day of the Republic of China (Taiwan). May the friendship between our two Free Nations remain robust.

#### PAYING TRIBUTE TO OUR NATION'S PRISONERS OF WAR AND THOSE WHO ARE MISSING IN ACTION

#### HON. JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to our Nation's prisoners of war and those who are missing in action.

"Though not here, their sacrifice is not forgotten" is the official phrase for the 2023 POW-MIA day that this year falls on September 15.

These heartfelt words serve as a reminder that there still are families that hope for the safe return of their loved ones that are missing in action and the wellbeing of those who were prisoners of war. Among those whose sacrifice will not be forgotten are over 130 Missing in Action service members and almost half a dozen of former Prisoners of War from Puerto Rico.

For Puerto Rican families, these words are more significant when we remember that families extend beyond the immediate relations of the spouse and children of the service member. The pain of the loss and the hope that the loved one will return to the "familia" spreads from the immediate nucleus into endless tree branches of the extended family. Conscious of this feeling it is important that we remember that while the missing served the Nation, hundreds of families miss them and plead that the sacrifice of their loved ones is not forgotten.

Puerto Ricans who were called to serve in distant lands under the most difficult conditions sacrificed everything, convinced that by fighting for the freedom of others they were preserving and guaranteeing the freedom, prosperity and democracy of their loved ones and of our country. Inspired by these ideas they performed feats of courage that surprised their enemies and earned them the respect of their brothers in arms and the recognition of their superior commands, creating a legacy of service that is difficult to emulate.

As time passes and the memory of the POW and MIA begin to fade, we run the risk of forgetting the sacrifice of the Missing in Action and the scars of their time as Prisoners of War. I encourage my congressional colleagues to make a solemn pledge to continually strive to never forget the honorable legacy of our POW and MIA and ensure that future generations never forget their sacrifice.

#### HONORING THE 2023 FLORIDA INVESTORS HALL OF FAME

#### HON. KATHY CASTOR

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 14, 2023*

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the ten inventors who have

been selected as the 2023 Inductees to the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame. To be named as an Inductee, these inventors were nominated by their peers nationwide and have undergone a thorough review by the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame Selection Committee. As a result, their innovations have been identified as significantly impacting the quality of life, economic development, and welfare of their communities, the residents of Florida, and the United States.

The Florida Inventors Hall of Fame was founded in 2013 at the University of South Florida. It was recognized by the Florida Senate with Senate Resolution 1756, adopted on April 30, 2014. Its mission is to encourage individuals of all backgrounds to strive toward the betterment of Florida and society through continuous, groundbreaking innovation by celebrating the incredible scientific work that has been, or is being, accomplished in Florida and by its citizens.

Nomination to the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame is open to all Florida inventors (living or deceased) who are or have been residents of Florida. The nominee must be a named inventor on a patent issued by the United States Patent and Trademark Office. The impact of the inventor and his or her invention should be significant to society, and the invention should have been commercialized, utilized, or led to important innovations.

The 2023 Inductees constitute the ninth class to be inducted into the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame. Their groundbreaking discoveries have transformed medicine and health care, computer technology and semiconductors, optics and photonics, communications, nuclear energy, and modern color technology. They collectively hold more than 1,100 U.S. patents and come from across industry, academia, and government. Since its founding, the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame has inducted 68 inventors, who collectively hold over 5,100 U.S. patents.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my neighbors in Tampa Bay and the residents of Florida, I am proud to honor the 2023 Inductees to the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame on this outstanding achievement. We are incredibly grateful to these innovators for their contributions to society and its constant revolutionization through their inventions. As the following ten inventors are inducted into the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame's growing community, I hope this may encourage future generations to strive toward this achievement and to continue the spirit of discovery and innovation.

The 2023 Inductees of the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame are:

James L. Cairns: Founder and Executive Director of the Cairns Foundation, and CEO of Abyssal Systems, Inc., who is recognized for pioneering underwater electrical, fiber-optic connector technologies that allowed circuits to be successfully and seamlessly mated and demated reliably within the harsh environment of the deep ocean thereby revolutionizing subsea surveillance, anti-submarine warfare, and ocean energy production.

Jason Eichenholz: Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer of Luminar Technologies, who is recognized for trailblazing innovations in laser and optics-enabled technologies, especially in lidar (light detection and ranging) applications advancing the self-driving vehicle industry; as well as fundamental product development and commercialization for early