

rates hitting their lowest levels in over twenty years.

Gacek implemented numerous reforms and initiatives that helped modernize the department, reduce crime and develop the community. Some of these reforms include the implementation of an evidence-based community policing strategy, updating the department's technology and information systems, expanding the department's analytical and intelligence capabilities, and developing several community engagement initiatives, among many others. Perhaps one of his greatest initiatives was the creation of the Concord Police Foundation, which supports Concord Police Department employees and their families and helps make Concord a safer community to live and work. Gacek established this program in 2021 in honor of Concord Officer Jason Shuping who was tragically killed in the line of duty on December 16, 2020.

I have known Chief Gacek for many years and witnessed firsthand the tremendous work he has done for the people of Concord. I am proud to call him my friend and know I speak for the whole community when I wish him well in this next chapter of his life.

Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, please join me today in congratulating Gary Gacek on his retirement and to thank him for his many years of dedicated service.

NOAH WERTZBERGER

HON. JEFFERSON VAN DREW

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 12, 2023

Mr. VAN DREW. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, today I celebrate the accomplishments of Noah Wertzberger and his recent achievement of the rank of Eagle Scout. Noah embarked on his scouting journey as a K-cub during his kindergarten years. Throughout his scouting experience, he remained actively involved and just recently completed his Eagle Project in October. His project involved the removal of two Osprey nests situated on the Great Egg Harbor Watershed. Once those were removed, he constructed and installed replacement Osprey Nests with the help of the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association. Noah is extremely grateful for Troop Seventy-Nine and the Boy Scouts for imparting invaluable lessons and fostering friendships. After achieving the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout, he now serves as an assistant scoutmaster, providing ongoing assistance to the Troop. In the upcoming fall, he will be attending Seton Hall University. Noah should be incredibly proud of his accomplishments, and I know he has a bright future ahead of him. God Bless Noah Wertzberger and God Bless the United States of America.

HONORING THE 2023 WOMEN OF
THE YEAR: MARGARET KOLK

HON. JOHN GARAMENDI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 12, 2023

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, I rise today to recognize the contributions of Margaret Kolk as she is honored as

one of California's 8th Congressional District's Women of the Year. Maggie is a passionate public servant who demonstrates a tireless dedication to serving her community. For the past nine years, Maggie has served as Chair of the Benicia Human Services Board, directing funding to local nonprofits that serve low-income Benicia residents and improving funding for city agencies. She is also the Secretary of Sustainable Solano, an environmental organization championing renewable energy and sustainable food production services. Along with her public service, Maggie has demonstrated equal dedication to serving her community through her volunteer work and political activism. For the past three years, Maggie has served as manager of the Benicia Community Garden helping to maintain an important resource that brings local sustainable food to Benicia residents. In 2016, Maggie co-founded Progressive Democrats of Benicia, now the city's largest political organization, and is currently spearheading a local ballot initiative to raise revenues to fix Benicia roads. She is known to never back down from the toughest challenges and to always offer her complete commitment to any undertaking. On behalf of the people of California's 8th Congressional District, it is my pleasure to honor and recognize Margaret Kolk for her positive contributions to our community.

NATO SUPPORTS UKRAINE AND
ISRAEL

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 12, 2023

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, this past weekend, I was grateful to participate with the U.S. Delegation for the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Copenhagen, Denmark, led by Delegation Chairman MIKE TURNER and Assembly former President GERRY CONNOLLY.

On Friday, the focus was on war criminal Putin's murderous invasion of Ukraine. NATO and the European Union have surpassed America with aid for Ukraine and incredibly Finland is now a NATO member with an 830-mile border with Russia, as Sweden gives up 200 years of neutrality to stop dictators. The West is united as never before in history to protect democracies.

On Saturday, with the sadistic invasion of Israel, there was extraordinary unanimity supporting Israel's territorial integrity. Clearly the axis of dictatorships of Putin, the regime in Tehran, and the Chinese Communist Party, had collaborated again with the invasion from Gaza. Sadly, the war we did not choose, Dictatorship with Rule of Gun against Democracies with Rule of Law, is proceeding and must be faced with Peace Through Strength.

On Sunday, Resolutions were presented from the five standing committees with amendments to be considered with debate. Parliamentarian Michal Szczerba of Poland presented Towards Reconstruction of Ukraine emphasizing payment by seized Russia assets, while Parliamentarian Njall Fridbertsson of Iceland explained Enhancement of Protection of allied critical maritime infrastructure.

Senator Rodrigue Demeuse of Belgium proposed the resolution on Protecting Allied De-

mocracies from Disinformation with provisions for addressing war crimes. Assemblyman Utku Cakirozer of Türkiye explained implementing NATO's new Deterrence and Defense Baseline. It is crucial we continue to stand with Türkiye as it is attacked by terrorists, just as we defeat the barbarian terrorists of Gaza. MP Alec Shelbrooke of Britain presented a Resolution Strengthening Stability and Security to the Black Sea Region following Russia's invasion, emphasizing grain deliveries for Egypt and African countries which are being destroyed by war criminal Putin.

On Monday, unanimously provided statements were issued supporting Israel as Iran's chants of Death to Israel, Death to America unfolded. Resolutions previously presented unanimously of 27 countries present were inspiring for the courageous citizens of Ukraine and Israel. There was unprecedented solidarity for freedom, democracy, and rule of law.

Stirring addresses were made of determined support for Ukraine and Israel for territorial integrity by NATO Parliamentary Assembly President Michal Szczerba, Danish Parliamentary Speaker Soren Gade compared the Hamas attack to 9/11 and Pearl Harbor, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen expressed concern that many are naive as to Russia and China, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy praised Israel's resolve and thanked all for help to Ukraine, Deputy Secretary General of NATO Mircea Geoana cited Europeans killed by Iran proxy Hamas in Israel, with NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation General Philippe Lavigne emphasizing importance of all countries to reach two percent for defense to achieve Peace Through Peace.

The sessions concluded with presenting the 2023 'Women for Peace and Security' award to Leader of Democratic Belarus Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya who courageously works for a democratic Belarus and political prisoner release including her husband.

NOAH BROWN

HON. JEFFERSON VAN DREW

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 12, 2023

Mr. VAN DREW. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, today I celebrate the accomplishments of Noah Quinton Brown and his recent achievement of the rank of Eagle Scout. Noah began scouting at the age of five, following in the footsteps of four generations of family before him. Now, having reached the highest rank in scouting, we celebrate his achievements. During his time in the Scouts, Noah has participated in countless fundraising and community service activities along with many different camping and hiking adventures. In July of 2022, Noah completed a 60-mile Trek at Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico where he achieved the Boy Scout 50 miler award. For his Eagle Scout Project, he built benches, a water station, and rehabilitated a pavilion for use by spectators at cycling events put on by Camp Edge in Alloway, South Jersey. His remains active in the scouts with his current position of Junior Assistant Scoutmaster at Troop 60 in Daretown, South Jersey. Noah is now a junior at Woodstown High School, consistently earning his way on to the

Honor Roll. Outside of scouting, he is an athlete on his school's Varsity Track and Field team and a volunteer at his church, all while maintaining a job at a local farm. Along with his Eagle Scout award, Noah will be presented with the Bronze and Gold palms for his remarkable leadership and his willingness to accept responsibility. I am incredibly proud of Noah for all his accomplishments in the Scouts and I know he has a bright future ahead of him. God Bless Noah and God Bless the United States of America.

HONORING THE 2023 WOMEN OF
THE YEAR: DR. MELVINIA KING

HON. JOHN GARAMENDI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 12, 2023

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, I rise today to recognize the contributions of Dr. Melvinia King as she is honored as one of California's 8th Congressional District's Women of the Year. As the Executive Director of Fighting Back Partnership, Melvinia helps lead the organization's drive to alleviate and eliminate poverty and substance abuse amongst youth in Solano County. Since joining the organization in 2018, she has spearheaded an agenda rooted in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision of "Creating the Beloved Community," addressing the complex issues of poverty and racism while simultaneously empowering families and nurturing the potential of our youth. Beyond this important work, Melvinia serves on several local committees, including the Solano County Workforce Development Board, Black Infant Healthcare Advisory Board, and Solano County Home Visiting Community Advisory Board. She is known by her colleagues as not only a strong advocate for change, but also an active contributor to it. Her work has created a lasting legacy that will touch the lives of countless individuals throughout our district. On behalf of the people of California's 8th Congressional District, it is my pleasure to honor and recognize Dr. Melvinia King for her positive contributions to our community.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 12, 2023

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker Pro Tempore, I am pleased to speak on the importance of Hispanic Heritage Month (HHM).

American society today embraces a remarkable breadth of cultures, and Hispanics are an integral part of this diversity.

The Hispanic American community is a beautiful array of distinct groups, including people with roots in Central and South America, including our neighbors in Mexico and the Caribbean, and Spain.

In 1968, President Lyndon Johnson designated a National Hispanic Heritage Week because of the growing impact of the Latin American culture in shaping the Nation and society.

The week was expanded in 1988 to a 31-day period by President Reagan to provide all Americans the opportunity to participate and commemorate the important contributions of the Hispanic culture to mainstream America.

Today in communities across the Nation millions of American families come together to celebrate in this facet of American culture and participate in traditional comidas and fiestas.

There are over 63.7 million Hispanics living in the U.S. and Hispanics continue to be the fastest growing ethnic group.

In Harris County, Texas there are 43.1 percent Hispanic, approximately 2.02 million people.

In 2022, 44.5 percent of the Houston population identified as Hispanic or Latino in the Census.

Not only is this a month to celebrate Hispanic culture and traditions, but it is also a time to reunite and celebrate the importance of keeping traditions alive through family gatherings and fiestas.

Yet, in the time we currently live in many families are separated from one another.

While we must acknowledge the challenges at our border, we should never forget that behind the statistics given to us are real families, real children, and real people in desperate need.

One of my own staffers, Amy Arceo, had her grandmother rejected USA entry and banned for 10 years due to crossing the border from Mexico, when all she wanted to do was to see her family and return home.

After those 10 long years and an additional 3 years to work her way through our immigration system, her grandmother Ma. Esperanza Bugarin was finally able to receive her papers to re-enter the USA.

Her family has been reunited after 13 long years of being separated from one another, the ban having forced her to miss many important family events.

During this month, let us reaffirm our commitment to promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and most importantly unity.

It is essential that we continue working together to break down barriers and ensure that all Americans, regardless of their background, have equal access to opportunities and the chance to achieve their dreams.

On behalf of my constituents and in my duties as a U.S. Representative, I am committed to speaking up for the rights of Hispanics and confronting the issues that affect them.

From lowering the uninsured healthcare rates and fighting to make higher education more affordable, to championing an increase in the minimum wage and addressing the economic challenges facing working women and families, my colleagues and I will continue working for the Latino community's top priorities.

Devoted to family, faith, country, and hard work, Hispanic Americans bring unique and bountiful perspectives and experiences to our national community and character.

The vibrant Hispanic influence can be seen in all aspects of American life and culture, and especially in Houston, Harris County and Texas, and from distinctive cuisine to colorful festivals, and from the rhythms and melodies of traditional music to the contagious beat of today's most popular songs.

The Hispanic community has persevered in the face of discrimination and hardships.

While significant barriers still stand in our way, I will continue fighting with a strong commitment to achieve comprehensive immigration reform and to support an inclusive and unified country.