

football at a local high for several years, before joining a midsized construction company.

Unfortunately, Fred's health forced him to leave construction after he and his twin were diagnosed with Alpha-1 in 1989. Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency is a genetic condition that increases a person's risk of developing lung and liver disease. Although there is currently no cure for Alpha-1, Fred always remained a vocal advocate for advancing research on the condition and supporting those also impacted by Alpha-1.

Over the years, Fred was deeply involved in both the Alpha-1 Foundation and AlphaNet, sister organizations co-founded in 1995 by Fred's twin, John. AlphaNet provides educational resources and health management services to members of the Alpha-1 community by connecting them with trained AlphaNet coordinators who also have Alpha-1. The Alpha-1 Foundation is a nonprofit focused on advocacy and advancing research on the condition. For many years, Fred served on the Executive Board of the Alpha-1 Foundation, including in the role of Vice Chair, and worked as an AlphaNet coordinator for nearly three decades.

After John passed in 2017, Fred worked to have legislation introduced in his brother's honor. The John W. Walsh Alpha-1 Home Infusion Act would allow for Medicare coverage of at-home augmentation therapy for Alpha-1 patients. For over three decades, Fred was a tireless champion of the Alpha-1 community, helping recently diagnosed members navigate the condition and continuously fighting to find a cure and improve treatment options.

Sadly, we lost Fred too soon on September 29, 2024, at the age of 75. Above all, Fred was a devoted husband to his wife, Pamela, and father to their daughters, Chase and Kailey. Fred's commitment to helping the Alpha-1 community throughout his time with the Alpha-1 Foundation and AlphaNet serves as an example to all, and his legacy will carry on through all those who had the great fortune of knowing and working alongside him.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to honor Fred Walsh, and I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing his lifetime of advocacy and dedication to supporting others with Alpha-1.

HONORING A CENTURY OF SERVICE AND SACRIFICE BY THE PARISH AT THE BLESSED SACRAMENT CHURCH IN THE EAST END

HON. SYLVIA R. GARCIA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Ms. GARCIA of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a century of service and sacrifice by the parish at the Blessed Sacrament Church in the East End, as they celebrate 100 years of the building's dedication this month. The church's origins are rooted in humble beginnings. In 1904 and 1905, families gathered under tents in the hot Houston summers, holding services with little more than their faith and determination. They lacked a building or enough people to appear on a Catholic census. Yet, their vision was clear—to create a lasting spiritual home for the community. By the end of the decade, they would establish a

modest building as the burgeoning young pastor, Father J. Schnetzer, sought to assemble a parish worthy of significance. By 1923, the parish had grown beyond its original space, and a new church was needed to meet the demands of the growing community. As the new church was erected, words from the Apostle Peter were carved into its cornerstone: "As you come to him, the living Stone . . . you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house." Bishop Byrne dedicated the new church on October 12, 1924. This cornerstone of faith did more than hold up walls—it upheld a community. After the Second Vatican Council, the introduction of Spanish services opened the doors wider, ensuring that the Blessed Sacrament Church could truly reflect the needs of the Latino families who had come to call the East End home. As it had a half-century earlier, the church grew inside those brick walls as the faith grew.

Mr. Speaker, for 100 years, this church has been a place of worship, solace, and support, serving as a beacon of faith for families in Houston's East End. It has always stood for people over politics, placing the community's needs first and foremost. I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating this important milestone and the generations of parishioners who have made the Blessed Sacrament Church into the spiritual house that Peter envisioned.

HONORING WASHINGTON COUNTY ON ITS 175TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Ms. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 175th anniversary of Washington County, Minnesota. On Tuesday, October 29th, the county board will hold a special meeting, open to the public, at the Washington County Historic Courthouse in Stillwater, the county seat and the birthplace of Minnesota. The recently restored Historic Courthouse was built in 1870 and served as the administrative and judicial center of the county for more than 100 years.

The first of Minnesota's counties, Washington County was established on October 27, 1849 through an act of the Minnesota Territorial Legislature which divided the Minnesota Territory into nine counties: Washington, Ramsey, Benton, Itasca, Wabasha, Dakota, Wadena, Mahkato, and Pembina. The county was named in honor of George Washington.

Among the smallest Minnesota's counties by area, it is the fifth largest county by population at 267,568 people according to the 2020 census. The easternmost county of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area, its southwestern border is defined by the Mississippi River and the St. Croix River which forms the county's eastern border with Wisconsin. At its southernmost point is the confluence of these two great rivers.

With diverse communities ranging from urban to rural, Washington County is home to a variety of thriving commercial, industrial, natural, and agricultural industries. Top among these industries is Health Care followed by Manufacturing, Professional, Scientific & Technical Services, Finance & Insurance, and Retail Trade. Population growth and a vital econ-

omy have allowed Washington County to develop a prosperous and diverse local labor force.

Washington County also boasts plentiful natural beauty, including the St. Croix River Valley, which was among the first areas to be designated as a "National Wild and Scenic River" by the federal government in 1968. William O'Brien State Park and Afton State Park offer hiking, camping, swimming, skiing, fishing, biking, birdwatching, and other outdoor recreation just a short drive from Saint Paul and its east metro suburbs. The river towns of the St. Croix, including Scandia, Marine on St. Croix, Stillwater, and Afton offer historic charms to weekend tourists throughout the year.

Throughout 175 years, Washington County has played a special role in Minnesota as a place of historic significance and great natural beauty. Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating this anniversary of special significance to our east metro community, the Fourth Congressional District, and the entire state of Minnesota.

RECOGNIZING PA-1'S HOMETOWN HERO: JEFF BEKOS

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary individual from Pennsylvania's First Congressional District—someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration that I recognize Jeff Bekos, one of our district's distinguished hometown Heroes.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolades but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their unwavering integrity, the strength of their character, and their steadfast commitment to the people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon which our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and, in doing so, call us all to higher standards of service and compassion. Jeff has embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

On July 5, 2013, the Bekos' lives changed forever when their vibrant 13-year-old daughter Hailey suddenly lost the ability to speak. Jeff and his wife, Liz, rushed her to the hospital, where she experienced the first of what would be thousands of seizures. In a matter of minutes, Hailey's life as a spirited cheerleader was upended, and she was diagnosed with Anti-NMDA Receptor Encephalitis—a rare disease that destroys brain cells, rendering patients unable to speak, walk, or control their movements. The weeks and months that followed were a tumultuous journey filled with countless challenges, seizures, and a four-month coma. Yet, through it all, the Bekos family found hope, faith, and strength through the community and support at the Ronald McDonald House, where they stayed for 254 days while Hailey fought for her life. This hope was instrumental in the fight for her life, and against all odds, Hailey emerged from her coma and is thriving today.

Now, Jeff is channeling his energy and gratitude into supporting families facing similar challenges. This summer, Jeff embarked on an extraordinary adventure, cycling 4,600 miles across the country from Irvine, California, to Philadelphia. The monumental endeavor, aptly coined "One Dad's Mission," is part of his goal to raise \$5 million for the Ronald McDonald House Charities to thank the organization that supported his family in their darkest hours and give back to other families navigating similar, unimaginable challenges.

Jeff's mission is more than a fundraising effort; it is shining example of how the support of community can provide the strength and hope to rise.

It is the work of individuals like Jeff that reminds us of the strength of the human spirit, turning your darkness into light, and uplifting other families facing similar challenges. Today, we honor Jeff Bekos not just for his remarkable service but for who he is—a true hero in every sense of the word.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Jeff Bekos for his extraordinary service. I ask my call to join me in honoring this exceptional individual, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May his example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.

HONORING THE 50-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE LEAGUE OF MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, we come together today to honor and celebrate the monumental 50-year anniversary of the League of Mexican American Women. Founded with a steadfast commitment to community service and empowerment, the League's journey has been one of resilience, dedication, and unwavering support for Latinas and the broader community.

The roots of the League trace back to a group of visionary women in the years 1973 and 1974, including Dolly Arredondo, Betty Rodriguez, Mercy Bencomo, Rachel Torres, and Rose Najera. In 1973, a pivotal moment arose when Dolly Arredondo extended an invitation to local Latina women, sparking discussions about the organization of the Mexican American Women for the betterment of the community. The League of Mexican American Women officially took shape in 1973 and was ratified in 1975. The organization's central tenet was community service, distinct from political pursuits. Its primary mission was to provide leadership training for Latina women in Fresno, fostering empowerment across generations and social backgrounds.

The League's inaugural women's conference, "La Primera Conferencia Femenil," chaired by Josie Mena, set the stage for a series of impactful gatherings. It convened in the same year at the Pinedale Community Center, focusing on critical topics such as health, economic well-being, and social justice. Distinguished by their deep experience in various organizations, the League's founding members

were no strangers to community engagement. They were committed volunteers, fundraisers, and educators who had often encountered roles relegated to auxiliary positions in male-led Hispanic organizations. The League was a platform to amplify their voices and elevate issues impacting Latinas.

As the Nation underwent the "feminine revolution," the League of Mexican American Women held a unique perspective. While they admired the broader women's movement, they believed that stronger leadership was needed within the Latina community. This sentiment was especially pronounced within the Chicano Movement on university campuses. Through this period of transformation, several college students joined the League, infusing it with energy and contributing to various programs. Throughout its journey, the League of Mexican American Women achieved significant milestones. Affiliation with the Comisión Femenil Mexicana National, Inc. in 1975 and participation in the ERA March in Washington, D.C. in 1980 highlighted their commitment to broader causes.

The League's legacy is interwoven with scholarship initiatives, community events, and partnerships that have transformed lives. From the Fiesta Navideña Fashion Show initiated by Betty Rodriguez, which has raised and awarded over \$511,000 in scholarships, to the Adelante Mujer Hispanic Conference, the League has exemplified dedication to education and cultural enrichment. Notably, the League fostered the Mariposa Project, designed to empower high school Latinas through education. The League's commitment to advocating for Latinas has remained steadfast. Over the years, it has inspired countless women to pursue higher education, secure leadership roles, and contribute to society. With its unwavering dedication, the League of Mexican American Women continues to inspire and empower, creating pathways of success for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my esteemed colleagues to join me in celebrating the 50-year milestone of the League of Mexican American Women. Its legacy stands as a testament to the transformative power of collective action, determination, and commitment to uplifting our community.

RECOGNIZING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF CHIEF TY SILCOX

HON. AARON BEAN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. BEAN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, four years ago, I answered one of the scariest phone calls a man can receive. My wife, Abby, called me to tell me lightning struck our house, and it caught on fire while she was inside it. But by the grace of God and the quick work of the fire department, Abby, our son Walker and our dog Daisy escaped unscathed.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my personal gratitude for one of the heroes who has been helping families like mine and saving lives for nearly four decades, Fernandina Beach Fire Chief Ty Silcox. Chief Silcox is retiring on October 31, 2024 after a decade on the job. Under his leadership, the department grew into a modern, efficient force overseeing

100 emergency responders across fire, EMS, and ocean rescue services.

His visionary work included the design and construction of a state-of-the-art fire station and the strategic management of resources during natural disasters.

I ask my colleagues to join me today to recognize Chief Silcox. I thank him. Northeast Florida is a safer place because of him. Let's go get 'em.

RECOGNIZING SPINA BIFIDA AWARENESS MONTH

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize October as National Spina Bifida Month, and to raise awareness and pay tribute to the more than 166,000 Americans living with Spina Bifida—the most common permanently disabling birth defect compatible with life. It is imperative we highlight the critical challenges to improved quality of life we must address to ensure each and every American can achieve their full potential.

The federal government has an obligation to advance research into devastating diseases and disabilities to help find cures and therapies and to identify preventative strategies. Equally important is federal support for programs and initiatives that help patients and their families as they struggle to live with these conditions, such as Spina Bifida.

Literally translated as "split spine," Spina Bifida is a condition that occurs when a baby's neural tube fails to develop or close properly. Typically occurring within the first 28 days of pregnancy while the neural tube is forming, Spina Bifida often develops before a woman even knows she is pregnant.

Sponsored by the Spina Bifida Association (SBA), National Spina Bifida Awareness Month is a time to highlight the needs of the community and recognize the importance of the work done year-round to advance research, programs, and policies aimed at meeting those needs.

As co-chair of the Congressional Spina Bifida Caucus, I've had the honor to work alongside SBA to advance Spina Bifida awareness, research, and public health efforts in Congress. Founded in 1973, SBA is the Nation's only organization solely dedicated to advocating for and assisting those living with and affected by this debilitating birth defect.

Through its nearly 60 chapters in more than 125 communities, SBA brings expectant parents together with those who have a child with Spina Bifida. This interaction helps to answer questions and concerns, but most importantly it lends much needed support, solidarity, inspiration, and hope.

Mr. Speaker, Spina Bifida is a birth defect that can happen to anyone. Every day, an average of eight babies are affected by Spina Bifida and approximately 3,000 pregnancies are affected by this birth defect each year.

We do not know the exact cause of this condition, but research has found that if a woman takes 400 mcg of folic acid every day before she becomes pregnant, she reduces her risk of having a baby with Spina Bifida or another neural tube defect by as much as 70 percent.