

and family pride. Whether through the many companies he founded and managed or as a respected horseman, Don's loss is deeply felt by all who knew him.

Born on January 5, 1939, to Jeanne and John Valpredo of Mettler, California, Don inherited a proud Italian heritage, fitting his later affectionate moniker of "The Don" or "El Don." His father had likely been the first pioneer to drill deep enough to find water in the Mettler area and the Valpredos established their roots there. After Don graduated from Garces Memorial High School, he then attended the University of California, Davis, where he graduated with a degree in Agronomy. He then went to serve our country in the U.S. Coast Guard, which, coupled with its premier academic training, provided a firm foundation to become a true visionary of agricultural excellence in Kern County.

Returning to Mettler after his service, Don partnered with his father, John, in farming. Don was gifted and soon found himself serving in a variety of executive roles. He served as President of Ridge Ginning Company and became an aggressive entrepreneur by founding Kern Ridge Growers, Val-Mar Farms, Bako Sweet, and Country Sweet Produce, among other companies. As a mark of the prevailing Valpredo family legacy, Don's son, Michael, was also a founder of Country Sweet Produce and continues to serve as its President. Under Don's leadership, his farms have grown to now produce over 20 crops year-round across thousands of acres. His businesses today are marked by innovations like water conservation, recycling, and employee co-ownership.

Nor can we forget Don's lifelong passion for horses, which adhered to him after the first horse he bred won her first race. Don's leadership within the horseracing industry shaped the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association (CTBA). Don served as CTBA President four times and once as chairman. In 2017, Don was inducted into the CTBA Hall of Fame for his forty years dedicated to building the sport and the California Cup Sprint. His work in helping to establish the California Cup Sprint—which was later renamed in his honor and is held at Santa Anita Park every January—stands as a lasting tribute to his leadership in developing this industry and racing community in California. Don served as a Commissioner and Vice-Chairman of the California Horse Racing Board, director of the Thoroughbred Owners of California for thirteen years, and served on the board of directors of the Breeders' Cup. Yet Don was not only a leader in equine associations, but also a winner of competitions. Don's 'Soviet Problem' won Calbred Horse of the Year in 1994, and he would always look back fondly on his time with that special steed.

Don is survived by his wife Sally, son Michael, daughters Natalia Fritz and Alexis Mosely, and seven grandchildren. Amanda and I send our condolences to this incredible family who have lost a great patriarch and leader.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me as we celebrate Don Valpredo's amazing life and legacy. From the fields of Mettler to the racetrack at Santa Anita Park, Don Valpredo will be dearly missed.

SUPPORTING H.R. 8371, ELIZABETH DOLE 21ST CENTURY VETERANS HEALTHCARE AND BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, every day, we lose an average of 17 veterans to suicide. This statistic is not just a number; it represents real lives, families, and communities torn apart by tragedy. Behind each of these 17 daily losses is a story of service, sacrifice, and struggle. These are our neighbors, friends, and family members who have worn the uniform with pride and honor. They are mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, whose absence leaves an irreplaceable void in countless lives. The ripple effect of each suicide extends far beyond the individual, impacting spouses, children, parents, friends, and fellow veterans. It creates a cycle of grief and trauma that can persist for generations.

As members of Congress, it is our responsibility to address this heartbreaking reality with the urgency and dedication it demands. Answering the call of duty to our veterans, I was proud to work with Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman JON TESTER to put forward H.R. 4157, Not Just a Number Act, legislation included in this Veterans omnibus package as Section 149 that would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to expand its scope when studying veteran suicide data. Instead of focusing solely on VA health care utilization, this bill mandates a more holistic approach, considering factors such as education, job training, housing, and other relevant socioeconomic factors. By broadening our perspective, we aim to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex, interconnected factors that contribute to veteran suicide. This approach will paint a more accurate picture of the multifaceted challenges our veterans face, enabling us to develop more effective support systems and interventions.

While the Not Just a Number Act is a crucial step forward, we must recognize that addressing veteran suicide is an ongoing commitment. This bill lays the foundation for a more comprehensive understanding, but our work will not end with its passage. We must be prepared to adapt our strategies based on the insights gained and continuously improve our support systems. This is merely the beginning of a long-term mission to safeguard the lives and well-being of our veterans.

We owe our veterans a debt of gratitude that can never truly be repaid. It is our responsibility to ensure that they feel our unwavering support and appreciation every single day. Let us honor our troops not just in words, but in our actions, by standing alongside them and their families. Together, let us ensure that they feel the depth of our appreciation and support at every step of their journey. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this critical legislation. By passing the Not Just a Number Act as Section 149 of the Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act, we demonstrate our commitment to those who have served our nation and do everything in our power to prevent veteran suicide. If you or a veteran you know is in crisis, please call the Veterans Cri-

sis Line at 988 and Press 1, or text 838255. Help is available 24/7, and you don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect with caring, qualified responders.

RECOGNIZING BERT V. MASSEY II

HON. AUGUST PFLUGER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Mr. PFLUGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the passing of former Mayor Bert Massey of Brownwood, Texas on November 13, 2024. Mr. Massey was born in Brownwood on October 3, 1943, and he was a pillar of leadership in his community throughout his life. Mayor Massey graduated from Brownwood High School and went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Texas in August 1967, followed by a Doctor of Jurisprudence from the University of Texas School of Law in January 1969. He served on the District Court for the Northern District of Texas and the United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Mr. Massey served on the city council from 1978 to 1984 and as Mayor of the City of Brownwood from 1984 to May 2010, while practicing law as a partner for Massey & West. As the longest-serving Mayor, Mr. Massey was instrumental in countless public infrastructure and quality-of-life projects. Among these are the renovations of the Depot Civic and Cultural Center, the construction of the Martin & Francis Lehnis Railroad Museum, the relocation of City Hall to Center Ave., the construction of the Joint Law Enforcement Center, the relocation of the Senior Citizens Center, the construction of the Bert V. Massey II Sports Complex and the Camp Bowie Family Aquatic Center.

Along with his years of service to his community, Mayor Massey was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. He was known for his wealth of knowledge, engaging stories about his beloved community and his warm smile. Mayor Massey's dedication to the Brownwood area and love for his family will be deeply missed by all. I am proud to honor Mayor Massey's many incredible contributions to the City of Brownwood, and I extend my deepest condolences to his family and all who had the privilege of knowing him.

NORTHFIELD FIRE COMPANY'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JEFFERSON VAN DREW

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Mr. VAN DREW. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to congratulate the Northfield Volunteer Fire Company on its 100th anniversary, marking a century of exceptional service. Over the years, many dedicated firefighters have been part of this outstanding department, with several serving for over 50 years. A few of their veterans recall their involvement in negotiating a deal in 1968 for land on Burton Avenue, where the current firehouse and training area are located. Times were different back then, as firefighters responded to calls in the 1960s and '70s with gear that was assigned on a "first

come, first served" basis. Despite these challenges, these brave men always answered the call and served their community valiantly. Today, the fire department has expanded and ensures that their firefighters have all the necessary gear, enhancing their reliability in Northfield. Recently, the department dedicated its new fire truck, Ladder 63, in honor of Jake Eggie and Robert Leeds, both of whom dedicated 50 years of service to the community. Fire Captain Flaherty and Chief Cummings have emphasized that you cannot celebrate 100 years without remembering those who made this achievement possible. Congratulations on 100 years of exemplary service. God bless the Northfield Volunteer Fire Company, and God bless our United States of America.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, during Roll Call Vote No. 465 on H.R. 8932, the FAFSA Deadline Act, I mistakenly pushed the wrong vote button. I intended to vote Aye and I support the bill.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I was absent from votes on November 14, 2024. Had I been present, I would have voted: YEA on Roll Call No. 461; NAY on Roll Call No. 462; YEA on Roll Call No. 463; and NAY on Roll Call No. 464.

I was absent from votes on November 15, 2024. Had I been present, I would have voted: YEA on Roll Call No. 465.

I was absent from votes on November 18, 2024. Had I been present, I would have voted: YEA on Roll Call No. 466; and YEA on Roll Call No. 467.

RECOGNIZING THE RETIREMENT OF CORAL SPRINGS, FLORIDA CITY MANAGER, FRANK BABINEC

HON. JARED MOSKOWITZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commend the 30 years of dedicated public service of Mr. Frank Babinec, the City Manager for Coral Springs, Florida. Over the years, Frank has displayed an unwavering commitment to the community's safety, well-being, and prosperity.

Frank's journey in public service began as a volunteer in 1993 when he joined what is now known as the Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department, putting his life on the line to protect others. His hard work and dedication led him to be appointed to Fire Chief in 2014. His commitment to public safety went beyond fire-

fighting. He championed emergency medical services and advanced training programs and strengthened partnerships with other public safety organizations, raising the department's standards and response capabilities.

In his role as Fire Chief, Frank supported the community through a tragic shooting that took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018. His leadership in the aftermath demonstrated his ability to provide calm and competent direction in times of crisis, encouraging a sense of resilience and unity within the community.

In 2019, Frank was appointed City Manager of Coral Springs. He has guided the city through unprecedented challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, and focused his commitment to the city's health and economic stability. Over the years, Frank has worked tirelessly to promote sustainable growth, improve city services, and address the needs of residents while fostering transparency and accountability in local government. During his distinguished career, he has earned numerous accolades and awards through his service over the last 30 years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Mr. Frank Babinec's invaluable contributions to the City of Coral Springs and his exemplary public service career. Frank's legacy in Coral Springs is one of compassion, strength, and deep commitment to serving others. I wish him all the best in his retirement.

RECOGNIZING HAROLD HIRSCH FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAXATION OF THE UNITED STATES

HON. JASON SMITH

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, with Ranking Member NEAL, to commend Harold Hirsch on his service to the United States Congress for over 47 years. Mr. Hirsch served as a lawyer and tax expert on the staff of the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation of the United States Congress from the beginning of 1977 to October, 2024, when he retired. Prior to 1977, Mr. Hirsch had worked as a lawyer for the office of the Judge Advocate General and for the Legislation and Regulations section at the Internal Revenue Service, government service for which we also thank him.

The staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation performs useful or at times indispensable functions to Members of Congress as the Legislative Branch develops tax policy. Mr. Hirsch's legal acumen, drafting brilliance, and deep understanding of tax issues contributed to the quality of tax legislation in numerous tax bills over the period he served on the JCT staff. Though reserved, even self-effacing, Mr. Hirsch brought thoughtful commentary to the development of proposed tax legislation. He gave an extremely careful reading of proposed legislative text, and his keen eye for possible statutory errors averted problems that would otherwise have plagued taxpayers, practitioners, and government administrators alike. Mr. Hirsch's technical skills and expertise in the craft of helping Congress produce the best statutory representation of Members' intent

redounded to the benefit of the American taxpayer.

This dedicated work should not go unknown and unrecognized. I thank Mr. Hirsch for his service in the field of tax legislation.

HONORING THE LIFE OF BERNARD MARCUS

HON. STEVE SCALISE

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life of Bernard 'Bernie' Marcus and his many contributions to our great nation.

Bernie was not only the co-founder of The Home Depot; he was also a self-made man, born to an immigrant family, who on many occasions turned adversity into opportunity.

He earned his degree from Rutgers University where he enrolled in pharmacy school. He went on to work in both the manufacturing and retail industries before becoming Chairman of the Board and President of Handy Dan Improvement Centers in 1972.

At age 49, Bernie, alongside his friend Arthur Blank, sought to bring to life a "vision of a one-stop shop for do-it-yourselfers"—The Home Depot. The pair opened the first two Home Depot stores in Atlanta, Georgia in 1979. Today, there are over 2,300 stores worldwide.

Despite all of his success, Bernie remained humble and always sought to live up to his mother's approach of "the more you give, the more you get."

His generosity to numerous charities undoubtedly helped so many throughout his lifetime. He supported causes like helping Jewish communities, our military veterans, and children with autism, just to name a few. He also started the Homer Fund to help The Home Depot associates who fell on hard times.

He built The Home Depot with the core values of giving back, excellent customer service, entrepreneurial spirit, respect for all, and doing the right thing according to their website. These values hold extra meaning for me as well.

When I was working my way through college at LSU to become the first in my family to earn a degree, I worked as a Home Depot associate and experienced firsthand the embodiment of these values. They still hold true for me today as they did back then.

Bernie truly believed in giving back, and his legacy of generosity and philanthropy will outlive him in the lives of people he has touched.

Bernie helped create a "nation of doers" and our world is certainly a better place because of him.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF SERGEANT ARTHUR O. McNITZKY

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor U.S. Army Sergeant Arthur Othello McNitzky. Arthur was the first Denton County soldier to die in combat in World War I. His