

on advocating for veterans, especially for Blue Water Navy veterans like him who suffered from similar service-connected health complications. Shockingly, the U.S. Veterans Administration in the early 2000's refused to grant "presumptive eligibility" for agent orange exposure health illness for veterans of AMERICA'S sea services. The VA's "foot on the ground" rule granted such coverage for Army and Marine Corps ground troops creating an outrageous disparity and discrimination against Navy and Coast Guard veterans of the Vietnam War. It took 17 years of constant advocacy to finally get Congress to pass a new law correcting this injustice. Paul's personal experience with the lasting impact of exposure served to enhance his advocacy ability, giving him a unique understanding of the hardship endured by many Vietnam era veterans. It was an honor for me as his congressman to help achieve this hard-fought legislative victory as an original cosponsor of this measure.

When he was appointed as the Northeast Regional Vice President of the National Association for Uniformed Services (NAUS), he worked on behalf of other veterans to protect and enhance their earned benefits.

After his retirement from the Navy, Paul joined Sonalyst Inc. By 1983, he started at Northeast Utilities as a telecommunication manager at Millstone Nuclear Power Station, retiring from his second career in 1997. One year after his second retirement, Paul started at the Retired Activities Office (RAO) at NSB New London where he remains today.

Paul's sense of modesty and obligation to the Connecticut veteran community has been evidenced through his numerous volunteer commitments. In addition to his work at the RAO, he participates in events to honor the veterans of the district, such as when he lays wreaths on graves of veterans at the Jordan Cemetery in Waterford as part of Wreaths Across America. Moreover, he served the Co-Chairman of Kaps for Kids in Groton. With Kaps for Kids, he visits sick children, brightening their days, at a local hospital each Veteran's Day. His attentiveness to those experiencing adversity is heartening and inspiring.

I am honored and privileged to know Paul Dillon on a personal level. Paul has been an irreplaceable asset as a member of my Veterans Advisory Council. His wisdom surrounding veterans issues is extremely useful, it is a pleasure to receive his guidance. He is a dear friend of my office and frequently assists on myriad issues relating to veteran affairs.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize and immortalize the continued works of Paul Dillon. In addition to his distinguished service career, he has been a mainstay of the veteran community within my district. It is no small consolation to know that model citizens like Paul continue to inspire future generations. I ask my colleagues in the House to join me in commending and thanking Paul Dillon for his endless service to the public.

HONORING TONYA FINLEY-MCCAW

HON. CORI BUSH

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

Ms. BUSH. Mr. Speaker, St. Louis and I rise to honor the life and legacy of Mrs. Tonya

Latrice Finley-McCaw. Mrs. Finley-McCaw was a remarkable servant leader who touched the lives of so many people across the St. Louis community.

A passionate advocate, Mrs. Finley-McCaw fought tirelessly for the rights of families and workers, including aiding efforts across the region and state for living wages and the right to unionize. Together, alongside her inspiring son and a stalwart community leader, Rasheen, the pair were never far from a picket line, joining striking workers and allies demanding fair wages in the "Fight for \$15" movement.

Mrs. Finley-McCaw was indefatigable. In addition to her strong support of labor rights and economic justice, she also chaired St. Louis City's Moms Demand Action chapter in an effort to tackle the crisis of gun violence in our communities and received several leadership certificates and accolades for her wide-ranging work and advocacy throughout the St. Louis region.

Born on July 7, 1970, in Chicago, Illinois, to her loving parents, Samuel and Dorothy Finley. She was also blessed with an amazing sister, Tejuania Finley. Finley-McCaw attended and graduated from Parkway South High School, where she was crowned prom queen. She later pursued higher education at St. Louis College of Health Careers and obtained her certification as a phlebotomist.

Mrs. Finley-McCaw was married to the love of her life, Rick McCaw, for 27 years. She is the proud mother of three sons: Rashaad Crawford, Rasheen Aldridge, and Rasheed Finley. She is the stepmother to Rickey McCaw, Rikieya McCaw, Malik McCaw, and Bernard Wings. When she wasn't spending time with her family or working to improve the lives of her St. Louis neighbors, Mrs. Finley-McCaw loved to cook (especially on holidays), play with her dogs, travel, and spend time with her grandchildren.

Mrs. Finley-McCaw was a great friend and mother figure to many. I have fond memories of her. I have fond memories of her helping to support me as I worked hard to represent the people of Missouri's First District. She provided unparalleled guidance and never faltered in the work of ensuring St. Louis has the representation it deserves at every level of government. I got to witness what a remarkable human she was to those around and what an incredible mother she was through my personal friendship with Rasheen. She touched so many of our hearts and she will be deeply missed. May her memory forever be a blessing.

RECOGNIZING MARIAN
MACFARLAND'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Marian MacFarland, a remarkable constituent from my district who is about to celebrate her 100th birthday. Marian was born on February 13, 1924, in Eldred, Pennsylvania, moved to Feasterville, and now resides in Newtown, Bucks County.

Marian Edgar graduated from Eldred High School, in Eldred, PA. She moved to Philadel-

phia, PA working at a Munitions Plant where she met John Russell MacFarland. Russ worked at the Naval Yard as the Chief Petty Officer in charge of repairs and re-outfitting the Naval ships. Marian and Russ were married on January 17, 1948, after he came home from World War II.

Marian and Russ moved to the suburbs in 1952, building their dream home together in Feasterville, PA. Marian worked for Strawbridge's department store in Philadelphia before starting a family. She and Russ are blessed with two sons, John and David, and one daughter, Jean Marie. She also has six grandchildren, and seven great grandchildren. She is immensely proud of the many family "get togethers" at her home where the main course was always chips and dip served with tuna hoagies.

Marian made her move to Buckingham Valley Rehabilitation Center with ease, making new friends as she shared her joys of life. She still enjoys gardening, working in the yard, trimming her plants, and attending to her flowers daily. Marian loves dancing, and she insists that it is what kept her in such great shape all these years. She loves her pet therapy visits and a nighttime snack with her roommate. Everyone who knows Marian would agree that her sweet tooth is her top priority.

Marian has an enthusiastic sense of humor and imagination. She loves to reminisce with her daughter Jean and son-in law, Bill about life's great memories, while her son David always comes for nightly visits. Marian has created lasting memories that affect every person she has encountered thus far in her life, and it is my fervent hope that she continues her positive impact on our community, district, and country.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my esteemed colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to please join me in extending our heartfelt congratulations, sincere well-wishes, and all of God's Blessings to Marian MacFarland on the celebration of her 100th Birthday.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY
OF BELLE ORTIZ, THE MOTHER
OF MARIACHI

HON. GREG CASAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

Mr. CASAR. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to call the attention of the House in recognition of the life and legacy of Belle Ortiz, a legendary San Antonian and the Mother of Mariachi.

Born on February 12, 1933, Isabel "Belle" A. Ortiz grew up on the west side of San Antonio, TX. She began her musical journey at the age of four, and as a youth, Ms. Ortiz performed across the city with various orchestras. After graduating from Our Lady of the Lake University, she began her career as a public school music teacher, eventually landing at Lanier High School, her alma mater, in 1970.

At a time when speaking another language besides English was frowned upon, Ms. Ortiz was committed to teaching music that reflected the rich cultural diversity of Texas. At Lanier High School in San Antonio, she created the high school ballet folklorico program, the first of its kind in the country. Through her continued advocacy, thousands of schools,

colleges, and universities worldwide now offer their student musicians a mariachi education.

Ms. Ortiz helped co-found the Mariachi Campanas de America, an award-winning ensemble of musicians that have performed all across the country, bringing the rich history of mariachi to places like the Hollywood Bowl, the Kennedy Center, and performed at the White House for five different U.S. Presidents.

An active member of her community in San Antonio, Ms. Ortiz served on many local

boards and committees, and was a recipient of many lifetime achievement awards and honors for her dedication to making mariachi and its rich history accessible to generations of aspiring musicians.

Her life is now being celebrated in the award-winning documentary “Suena La Educación: The Story of Belle Ortiz”. This month, the Lanier High School music building in San Antonio, TX, will be renamed in her honor.

In Ms. Ortiz's final days, hundreds of mariachi musicians came to her bedside and played for her, paying tribute to this trail-blazing icon. As the Congressman for the 35th District of Texas, I am honored to celebrate the life of Ms. Belle Ortiz, who left behind an incredible legacy that transformed mariachi music from a local tradition into a worldwide cultural phenomenon.