

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING VELETER M.B. MAZYCK
FOR HER SERVICE TO CONGRESS

HON. SHONTEL M. BROWN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to honor an individual whose service, character, and dedication have left an indelible mark on this institution and the people it serves.

I first met Veleter M.B. Mazyck in 2017 when I was selected to participate in the CBC Institute bootcamp. I could not have known then that four years later Veleter would become not only my chief of staff but also a trusted advisor, confidant and an unwavering partner in serving the people of Ohio's Eleventh Congressional District.

A steady hand who had served my predecessor for more than a decade, Veleter has been vital to the success of my office ever since.

As she prepares to retire, I rise to recognize a career defined by integrity, selflessness, and an unwavering commitment to public service.

Too often, the contributions of Congressional staff remain behind the scenes—unnoticed by the public, but essential to our democracy.

Far from the cameras, the House chamber, or the committee dais, staff work long hours—they are driven by a deep and abiding sense of duty.

Veleter Mazyck personifies this culturally, spiritually and professionally.

She is known for being both wise and witty, spontaneous and strategic, careful and kind, thoughtful and thorough but most importantly a loving, loyal, steady and steadfast steward of our Nation. And a calm and commanding force behind every success.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Veleter Mazyck ensuring her legacy endures for years to come.

An unsung hero of this institution, Veleter committed herself to honing the skills and talents the Lord had blessed her with . . . To bending the moral arc of the universe that little bit closer to justice . . . And to ensuring our government serves its people with respect, dignity, and compassion.

After a celebrated career as a General Counsel to large metropolitan school districts, Veleter agreed to serve as Congresswoman Fudge's Chief of Staff—for one year or maybe two.

And yet—a decade later . . . Veleter was still here—a cornerstone of the office, the Congress and, dare I say, the country and the constitution.

Through her efforts, legislative priorities were championed with purpose and passion, crises were managed with character and charisma, and partnerships were forged both publicly and privately—all with the goal of creating a better future for the people of Ohio's Eleventh District.

Following my predecessor's appointment to President Joe Biden's cabinet, Veleter skillfully

managed the office during the transition, ensuring constituents continued to receive the support they needed.

Upon my swearing in, her wealth of experience and knowledge allowed me to confidently step into my role. Ever since, Veleter's deep understanding of this institution has been invaluable.

In moments of uncertainty, Veleter was the steady hand, navigating challenges with poise and resolve. In moments of triumph, she celebrated not personal accolades, but the victories achieved for the people of Northeast Ohio. And in every moment in between, she exemplified the highest standards of professionalism and dedication.

What truly sets Veleter apart is her ability to bring out the best in those around her.

Whether mentoring young staffers or building coalitions with colleagues, she led with patience, humility, and a genuine belief in the power of collaboration.

After 13 years, the countless individuals she has impacted, from colleagues to constituents, are a testament to the lasting influence she has had on all who have worked with her.

Those testimonials include the following reflections from former colleagues:

Eyang Garrison: "Veleter once told me she believed smart people could do anything and I've never forgotten that. I often think back on her saying that to me when I interviewed with her back in 2019 after I expressed doubts about newly taking on a managerial role. To feel that someone as well respected as Veleter, saw something in me that at the time I didn't see in myself, was one of the most influential moments in my professional career. There really is no one like Veleter. Thank you for your love and support for both me and my family throughout the years. Love you!"

Kellie Adesina: "When I reflect on my career on Capitol Hill, I often refer to my time in former Rep. Marcia L. Fudge's office as the transformative years that helped shape me into the government affairs professional I am today. My experience was, in large part, due to the guidance, firm support, and encouragement from Veleter. As her Legislative Director, she empowered me to lead, never allowed me to settle for mediocrity, and demonstrated through her actions what it meant to guide a team with grace, humility, and compassion. I'm forever grateful for the impact she's made on my life and wish her the very best of everything as she retires from federal service because she deserves it and more."

LaDavia Drane: "Veleter and I shared an office back in the early 2010s. I can recall so clearly the day she was introduced to the team by our member of Congress. Veleter inspired me, and demanded of me, to do my very best at work every single day. She modeled the high standards of a woman in politics on the Hill, providing me with a safe place to learn and grow. I miss those days and will always fondly remember our time together. I wish Veleter the best as she journeys forward. I hope she'll continue to teach, mentor and coach, as she did for me, wherever she

spends her time after her retirement from the Hill. Love you, Veleter!"

Kim Edwards: "Veleter is the kind of person I wish I had met earlier in my professional journey. From the moment I joined Congresswoman Brown's team, she quickly became not only a role model but also a source of clarity and focus. One of the most striking things about Veleter is her ability to cut through the noise. She expected clear, concise communication, particularly when it came to goals and direction for the team. To her, everything else was secondary. Her straightforward, no-nonsense approach taught me the importance of focus, discipline, and above all, staying priority driven. Veleter and I also made a great team—she, a Green from the Pace Color Pallete, always demanding excellence from our staff, and I, a Blue, often seeking to find the best in everyone. Together, we struck a balance that helped us elevate the work we did while maintaining a positive, collaborative environment. At the end of the day, Veleter always knew how to analyze the situation, identify the key priorities, and get the work done. She leaves behind a legacy of strength, leadership, and unwavering dedication to the work she did for the people of OH-11. I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with her and to have learned so much along the way. Wishing you all the best in your retirement, Veleter. You will be greatly missed."

Jasmine Butler: "Veleter has been one of the most impactful mentors in my life. I had no idea what to expect or how to prepare to work in a Congressional office when I arrived on the Hill on November 15, 2021. What I appreciate most about my experience with Veleter is that she required a level of excellence that pushed me beyond what I thought I could achieve. She embodies unapologetic excellence, refusing to shrink for the sake of others. To witness another Black woman so fearless and bold in the presence of those who may consider themselves more prominent helped me subconsciously eliminate personal beliefs of unworthiness. She showed all of us that we can do and achieve anything. It was no cliché. It was our reality because she required excellence, innovation, and the highest level of service to the constituents of Ohio's Eleventh Congressional District. I cannot thank her enough for her impact on me as a professional, a confidant, and a friend. I wish her all the joy, love, excitement, new adventures, and peace her heart can hold. She truly deserves that and so much more."

Imani Edwards: "Without the mentorship, correction, and love from Veleter Mazyck, I would not be the woman or professional I am today. Veleter has a way of always making you want to try harder and show up as the absolute best version of yourself. As a young Black woman navigating Capitol Hill, Veleter reminded me that if I could find a way to excel in midst of chaos, trial by fire is how she put it, then no person, place or thing would ever hinder my success. She gave me a confidence that I continue to carry with me in any professional arena I enter. I wish her all the

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

best in her well-deserved retirement! Thank you for everything, Veleter!”

As Veleter steps away from Capitol Hill, I know that her contributions will continue to ripple outward. The legacy she leaves is one of progress, integrity, and hope.

Throughout her career, she has often spoken about the importance of getting off the dance floor. It was, as she says, your role as a leader is to get to the balcony—to better see the bigger picture.

As she retires, it's time to leave both the balcony and the dance floor behind. Now, the stage is her's to set. Whether it's traveling, writing, or pursuing new passions—retirement is her front-row seat to a life of her own design.

On behalf of a grateful Congress, a grateful district, and a grateful Nation, I thank her. I thank her for her vision, virtue and vigilance. We are better because of her sacrifice, and for her unwavering commitment to seeing our Nation not for what it was—but for what it could be.

We wish her all the best in her well-earned retirement, with full confidence that her impact on this institution and the Nation it serves will live on for generations to come.

HONORING SHEQUITE JOHNSON

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable servant, Mrs. Shequite Johnson.

Shequite Johnson leads an extraordinary and busy life, balancing her career, volunteer commitments, and her roles as a wife and mother—all with a radiant smile. She is married to Derrick Johnson and is the proud mother of four children: Jameshia, Semaj, Derrick Jr., and Nathaniel.

A dedicated member of Ruleville's Delmar Church of Christ under Pastor Billy Moore's leadership, Shequite serves on the Benevolence Committee, embodying her deep commitment to service and community.

Born and raised in the Mississippi Delta, Shequite has faced numerous challenges throughout her life. Yet, with courage and determination, she has transformed those experiences into a powerful source of inspiration, encouraging others to believe in themselves and turn both triumphs and trials into fuel for progress.

Professionally, Shequite has devoted herself to roles within the helping professions, using each opportunity to foster community advancement and personal growth. Her journey reflects her deep commitment to community empowerment and personal growth. Her impactful AmeriCorps service, where she supported individuals facing generational poverty and limited resources, ignited her passion for economic and social transformation. This inspired her to pursue higher education, earning degrees in Criminal Justice, Rural Public Policy and Planning, and now a Ph.D. in Public Administration.

Professionally, Shequite advanced through roles in the Sunflower County Consolidated School District and later joined Higher Purpose Co. (HPC), a nonprofit dedicated to em-

powering Black communities. As Chief Program Officer, she contributes to reshaping narratives around poverty and fostering financial and cultural empowerment.

Beyond her career, Shequite is an active volunteer, leading Girl Scout Troop 30123, serving with the Sunflower County Freedom Project, and participating in organizations like the Mississippi Valley State Alumni Association, the NAACP, and a plethora of meaningful and educational organizations. Her dedication to education, leadership, and service inspires others and creates meaningful change in her community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mrs. Shequite Johnson for her dedication and tenacity to serving her community and desire to be an example for all.

RECOGNIZING MIKE NELSON

HON. JASON CROW

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

Mr. CROW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and thank one of my constituents, chief meteorologist Mike Nelson, for his service to Colorado. For 33 years, Mr. Nelson has appeared on our TVs, providing informed and crucial weather reports to help Colorado families prepare for blizzards, floods, tornadoes, and wildfires. Mr. Nelson has also been there in the moments of calm—when a day spells blue skies, warm sun, and for many, time spent in Colorado's great outdoors.

Mr. Nelson, chief meteorologist of Denver7 since 2004, has not only informed Coloradans of weather reports but has profoundly affected how we receive weather reporting in the U.S. In 1979, he and his colleague Terry Kelly devised one of the first computer weather graphics systems—one which continues to be the most widely embraced system in the country. Mr. Nelson also introduced the first weather computer to Colorado in 1982.

With 20 Emmy awards, including 18 for Outstanding Weather Anchor, Mr. Nelson has served Colorado by making weather and climate change reporting more accessible. His dedication to weather reporting has gone beyond the TV screen. He has been actively involved in educating hundreds of thousands of students, including with his tornado dance, and, most recently, writing 'The World's Littlest Book on Climate,' a book geared towards climate outreach and education.

I join Coloradans in congratulating Mike Nelson on his retirement after nearly 50 years on television and thank him for his commitment to our state.

TRIBUTE TO MARY WITHERSPOON BLANDING

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a long-time public servant in my hometown of Sumter, South Carolina. Mrs. Mary Witherspoon Blanding is retiring as Clerk to the Sumter County Council after 34 years.

Mrs. Blanding was selected as County Clerk in April, 1990 and is the longest serving Clerk in Sumter County Council history.

Mrs. Blanding is the third child of the late Dea. John Ivory Witherspoon and the late Deaconess Dorothy Mae Smith Witherspoon. She grew up in South Sumter and attended Sumter County schools during the days of segregation. After graduating from Sumter High School, she received a Diploma from Palmer Junior College and a Bachelor of Science Degree from Morris College. She later attended Phoenix University, and earned her certification as a Certified Clerk to County and Certification as a Master Clerk to County Council from the Riley Center of the College of Charleston. Mary is also certified as a Dean of Christian Education through the South Carolina Baptist Congress of Christian Education (SCBCCE), where she also earned her teacher Certificate and a Diploma for Christian Education.

Mrs. Blandings public service stems from many years of volunteer services rendered toward grassroots efforts, in schools, and faith-based activities throughout Sumter and Clarendon Counties. She has served as a committee member of the Sumter Chamber of Commerce, the former Secretary and Treasurer of the Santee Wateree Regional Transportation Board of Directors, and a member of the Business and Office Advisory Board for Central Carolina Technical College. During her tenure on the S.C. Clerks to Council Association, she was selected as President and served on the Certification Committee. She is also an active member of the newly established Women Pioneer Luncheon Committee and, in 2020, served as an Honorary Wing Commander at Shaw Air Force Base.

Over her career, Mrs. Blanding has been selected for numerous honors and awards, such as the J. T. McCain Public Service Award, the American Association of Women in Community and Junior Colleges Award, a TWIN Honoree (Tribute to Women In Business and Industry), a Government Honoree for Mt. Zion Baptist Church Black History Month, and the Woman of Excellence Award by the Social Justice Consortium.

Prior to her professional career, Mrs. Blanding became the first student to be honored as Miss Sumter High School in 1970, and the first Black student crowned as Ms. Palmer Junior College in Charleston, South Carolina.

Mrs. Blanding is married to Kenneth Orlando Blanding. They have four children, Jamie (Carl), Kimberly (Eric), Elijah, and Zoie, and two grandsons, Brian and Micah. She is a member of Hopewell Baptist Church where she serves as a Deaconess, Program Committee Chairwoman, Christian Education Director, Church School Teacher, and a member of the Praise and Workshop Ministry, Sanctuary Choir, and Women Ministry.

She loves gardening—especially herbs, peppers, and tomatoes—and traveling and trying new dishes during her travel. Mrs. Blanding has fostered peace and prosperity for the entire Sumter Community throughout her decades of service. One of Mrs. Blanding's life mottos is “as much as possible within you, live peaceably with all persons.”

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and our colleagues join me in recognizing the remarkable career of Mrs. Mary Witherspoon Blanding, and wishing her continued success and many