

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 (SCBCCCE), 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

blessings as she begins the next chapter of her life.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 5012—SHINE  
FOR AUTUMN ACT

**HON. YOUNG KIM**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 11, 2024*

Mrs. KIM of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on stillbirth which is a maternal and infant health crisis that tragically accounts for the deaths of over 21,000 babies every year in our country. Studies indicate that at least 25 percent of U.S. stillbirths are preventable, and addressing these preventable cases could save at least 5,250 babies each year. Sadly, despite these alarming statistics, stillbirth is one of the most underfunded and underresearched public health issues today.

To address high stillbirth rates, we need to improve data collection, research, and awareness. I introduced the bipartisan Stillbirth Health Improvement and Education (SHINE) for Autumn Act, H.R. 5012, with Rep. KATHY CASTOR that would do just that. The SHINE Act creates the first comprehensive federal-state partnership to streamline data collection on stillbirth across the Nation.

I would like to include in the record a link to more than 1,500 testimonies from parents and families affected by stillbirth: <https://youngkim.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/H.R.-5012-SHINE-for-Autumn-Act-Testimonies-1.pdf>. I hope for swift action from Congress to ensure healthier pregnancies and decrease stillbirth rates.

HONORING KAY GRANGER

SPEECH OF

**HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 10, 2024*

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Chairwoman KAY GRANGER on her retirement and congratulate her on three decades of dedicated service to the 12th Congressional District of Texas and the United States of America.

Chairwoman GRANGER has been a great friend and confidant to me, providing guidance and giving helpful advice. As a senior member of the Texas delegation, Chairwoman GRANGER has been an influential, conservative leader who prioritized the 12th Congressional District of Texas and has led the Appropriations Committee with ample experience, wisdom, and grace.

From being the first Republican Congresswoman from Texas to being the first Republican woman to chair the House Appropriations Committee, Congresswoman GRANGER will be leaving with an impactful legacy. She has always fought for our national security, our troops, and Veterans, to provide all the support they need for their daily sacrifice to our Nation.

I have been honored to work with the Chairwoman on advancing legislation that benefits Texans and strengthens our state economically. On behalf of her constituents, the Texas

delegation, and Republican colleagues, KAY will be greatly missed and our Nation thanks her for her commitment to America.

RECOGNIZING MY EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT, JULIA LOPEZ, FOR HER EXCELLENT WORK ON BEHALF OF MINNESOTA'S THIRD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

**HON. DEAN PHILLIPS**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 11, 2024*

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my Executive Assistant, Julia Lopez, for her work on behalf of every constituent in Minnesota's Third Congressional District. I could not be more proud of grateful for her service.

Born and raised in Athens, Georgia to proud Filipino immigrants, Julia attended the University of Georgia, where she studied Anthropology and Asian American Studies. While in Georgia, she spearheaded the COVID-19 vaccine program at her family's pediatrics clinic and was one of the earliest programs in northeast Georgia to have vaccines available for under-represented communities and low-income families of color. She was active in Filipino student organizations while at UGA and has brought her passion for Asian American communities to the Hill. Julia first started in my office through the Asian Pacific American Institute of Congressional Studies (APAICS) placement program in spring 2022 and joined our team full time in February 2023 as our Executive Assistant.

A proud Filipina American, Georgian, and student group extraordinaire, there's nobody better at bringing positive energy a room than Julia. Julia is a great role model for all our interns and one of the biggest reasons why they have such a great experience in our office. Julia has been a critical part of making sure the office runs smoothly. Julia's commitment to ensuring students visiting our office in Washington, DC have an engaging and informative experience is admirable. She has personally ensured that hundreds of MN-03 students have met with me and toured our Nation's Capitol.

Julia exemplified Radical Hospitality by always going above and beyond for constituents and spreading joy to those around her. She is credited with starting the "Joke of the Day" tradition in my daily briefing books, which provided much needed moments of levity during particularly stressful days. She was willing to take on any and all tasks and do it with a smile. Julia's role has shifted at multiple points during her tenure with our team—and she has been willing and eager to ride the waves as our needs as an organization have changed. From working with my Senior Advisor during my time on the Democratic Policy and Communications Committee, to assisting my Staff Assistant with tours, Julia's flexibility has been a critical asset.

The people of Minnesota's Third Congressional District were lucky to have her dedication and leadership, and she will be dearly missed. I wish Julia all the best in her future endeavors and thank her for two years of faithful service to this Nation.

HONORING LIEUTENANT GEORGE  
T. MCCREE, III

**HON. GLENN IVEY**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 11, 2024*

Mr. IVEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor a true American hero, Lieutenant George T. McCree, III, from Clinton, Maryland. Lt. McCree's service to our Nation and to this Capitol deserves our highest praise and recognition.

In his various roles with the United States Capitol Police, Lt. McCree protected not only this hallowed institution, but also the principles it represents: democracy, justice, and opportunity. He served in many capacities here on the Hill including as a dispatcher, special agent, instructor, sergeant, and lieutenant. Those who worked alongside him remember his professionalism, his quiet strength, and his unshakeable commitment to ensuring that the Capitol remained a beacon of freedom and governance. Lt. McCree's story reminds us that the legacy of those who serve is not just written in the battles they fight, but also in the lives they touch and the barrier they break. As we stand here today, in a building he has protected, let us remember his myriad contributions. I know that even as Lt. McCree retires from the United States Capitol Police, that he will continue to serve his community and our region as an involved citizen, parent and proud military veteran.

RECOGNIZING SARPY COUNTY  
SHERIFF JEFF DAVIS

**HON. DON BACON**

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, December 11, 2024*

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Sarpy County Sheriff Jeff Davis, who has selflessly given 51 years of his life to "protect and serve" the residents of Sarpy County, Nebraska. Sheriff Davis started as a dispatcher in 1973 at the age of 18. After getting his law enforcement officer certification, Davis became a deputy sheriff for Sarpy County in 1974. Working his way through the ranks, he became a sergeant in 1985, lieutenant in 1989, captain in 1990, and chief deputy in 1999. In May 2005, Sheriff Davis was appointed to serve the remaining term of Sheriff Pat Thomas, who retired. He subsequently won reelection in 2006 and has served diligently in that capacity since then.

He was recognized in 2019 for his work when he was inducted into the Nebraska Sheriffs Association Hall of Fame. Davis's other achievements include serving as the past president and vice president of the Sarpy County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 3 and receiving the "Michael J. Elman Officer of the Year" Award. He received the Bellevue Kiwanis Chapter "Officer of the Year" award. While serving a term on the Bellevue City Council in 1996, Davis was presented the "Jewel of Bellevue" award by Past Bellevue Mayor Boyd.

Sheriff Davis has worked on many initiatives to handle the growing population of Sarpy County. The department routinely trains in Standard Response Protocol, working with