

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGÁN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 12, 2024*

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Mr. Speaker, I missed votes on the House floor. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 122; NAY on Roll Call No. 124; YEA on Roll Call No. 125; YEA on Roll Call No. 126; YEA on Roll Call No. 127; NAY on Roll Call No. 283; NAY on Roll Call No. 285; NAY on Roll Call No. 406; YEA on Roll Call No. 407; NAY on Roll Call No. 408; NAY on Roll Call No. 420; YEA on Roll Call No. 432; YEA on Roll Call No. 436; NAY on Roll Call No. 437; NAY on Roll Call No. 438; YEA on Roll Call No. 439; and YEA on Roll Call No. 479.

HONORING KEIRSTEN LYONS FOR HER DEDICATION TO AMERICA'S FALLEN HEROES

**HON. CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS**

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 12, 2024*

Mrs. RODGERS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Keirsten Lyons, Director of the Washington State Fallen Heroes Project, a woman whose life's mission exemplifies the enduring power of love and remembrance. Her dedication to her son's memory and to the families of our Nation's Fallen Heroes is a profound testament to the enduring sacrifices made in defense of our freedoms.

Keirsten's journey is one of love, resilience, and a mother's unyielding commitment to ensure her son's sacrifice is never forgotten. On January 1, 2014, her beloved son, Marine Sergeant Jacob Michael Hess, gave his life during a deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Sgt. Hess was a dedicated Marine, a cherished husband, son, brother, and friend who embodied the highest ideals of service and honor. Though her loss is unimaginable, Keirsten has transformed her grief into a powerful force for good, ensuring that the legacy of her son and so many others lives on.

As the Director of the Washington State Fallen Heroes Project, Keirsten has committed herself to a sacred mission, to honor those who raised their hand to serve and made the ultimate sacrifice, to support the families who carry the weight of their loss, and to engage communities in never forgetting the price of freedom. Her work serves as a rallying call to all of us, reminding us that the freedoms we hold dear were secured through unimaginable sacrifices.

Under Keirsten's leadership, the Project has expanded its reach and impact. Events such as the March for the Fallen, Ruck, Run, or Walk have created spaces for families and communities to come together in shared remembrance. For Keirsten, these gatherings are deeply personal. By sharing their stories, families transform grief into connection, ensuring their loved ones remain alive in the hearts of those who learn their stories.

Through initiatives like the Illuminating Courage Memorial and the Heroes Garden, Keirsten has built a legacy of remembrance in

the Eastern Washington community that will endure for generations. Her tireless efforts have provided comfort and healing to Gold Star families, creating a community where grief is shared, and the sacrifices of the Fallen are eternally honored. She reminds us that behind every Fallen Hero is a family who has borne the cost of freedom.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States House of Representatives and the citizens of Washington's Fifth Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Keirsten Lyons for her extraordinary devotion. May her work continue to remind us that the legacy of a hero does not end on the battlefield—it lives on in the stories we tell, the memories we preserve, and the gratitude we hold.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. PAUL TONKO**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 12, 2024*

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, during Roll Call Vote number 500 on H.R. 5009, I mistakenly recorded my vote as YES when I should have voted NO.

CELEBRATING THE CAREER OF DIANA GOMEZ

**HON. J. LUIS CORREA**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 12, 2024*

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the career and professional achievements of Diana Gomez, who spent over 36 years as an electrical engineer and contributed to our community as part of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

Born in Fresno and raised in the City of Parlier, Ms. Gomez graduated from Parlier High School and was named as the first member of the Parlier Unified School District Hall of Fame. She earned her bachelor's degree in electrical engineering at California State University, Fresno.

Ms. Gomez developed more than 36 years of transportation experience with Caltrans in various positions, including Senior Transportation Electrical Engineer and Chief for the offices of Traffic Management and Systems Management Operations. In 2011, Ms. Gomez was appointed as the Deputy District Director of Operations in Los Angeles, making her the highest-ranking Latina engineer within the California State Employees, a title she still holds.

Her last assignment with Caltrans was serving as District 6 Director with responsibility for the State Highway system in Fresno, Madera, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties. From the time she filled the role in July 2020 up to her retirement, she helped secure more than one billion dollars for the district and local partner projects.

Prior to her appointment as District 6 Director, Ms. Gomez was appointed by Governor Brown in 2012 to serve as the Central Valley Regional Director of the California High-Speed Rail Authority. As the Regional Director, she worked to build strategies and maintain rela-

tionships with local advocates, residents, consultants, and policy makers to ensure the high-speed rail project in the Central Valley continued on-time and on budget.

Ms. Gomez is an active member of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) and was even named one of the "100 Most Influential Hispanics" by the Hispanic Business magazine for her role as SHPE's National President. She served in this role for six years, having also occupied several other leadership positions with the organization. Under her leadership, SHPE grew exponentially in its membership and revenue.

Ms. Gomez has maintained her roots in Fresno County and is a member of the Fresno State School of Engineering Advisory Council, Vice Chair of the Fresno State Alumni Association, and Board Member for the Fresno State Transportation Institute. Her other professional affiliations include serving on the Board of Directors for the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, and she is a member of Women in Transportation (WTS) and founder of the WTS Central Valley Chapter.

I call on my colleagues to join me in celebrating the exceptional career and lifetime achievements of Diana Gomez, and to congratulate her on her well-deserved retirement.

CELEBRATING OUR 2024 FALL INTERNSHIP CLASS FOR THEIR SERVICE TO CALIFORNIA'S 20TH DISTRICT

**HON. VINCE FONG**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 12, 2024*

Mr. FONG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the outstanding interns who have dedicated their time and talents to serving the 20th District of California this fall. These bright and committed young people, working from both our Washington, D.C., and Clovis, California offices, have brought fresh perspectives, unwavering enthusiasm, and a shared passion for making a difference. At a time when many young people are questioning the role of public service, their dedication inspires confidence in the leaders of tomorrow.

As their fall internships come to a close, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Grace Lee Delgado, Elijah Lidgett, and Tristan Wertanzl for their contributions to our Washington, D.C., office and to Jake Dowell for his service in our Clovis, California office. Their hard work has been instrumental to our efforts, and I trust that the skills and educational experiences they have gained will guide them toward continued success in their future endeavors in public service.

FAREWELL REMARKS BY HON. CORI BUSH

**HON. BARBARA LEE**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 12, 2024*

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the impactful service of my friend and colleague, Congresswoman CORI BUSH.

Congresswoman BUSH came to Congress making history as the first Black woman elected from Missouri.

Her work as a faith leader, nurse and community organizer at the frontlines of the Black Lives Matter Movement prepared her to fight for the people of St. Louis in the halls of Congress.

Since coming to Congress, Congresswoman BUSH has made her mark as an outspoken voice for racial, social and reproductive justice.

Rep. BUSH fought to address systemic inequities in healthcare, policing and housing. She has been a consistent champion for policies that uplift and empower every community in St. Louis.

Representative CORI BUSH is and will continue to be a fearless voice for justice and equity.

Her advocacy for working families, Black and brown people, the LGBTQ+ community, and all marginalized groups has made a lasting impact on her constituents not only on her district but our Nation.

Her commitment to her values has shaped the direction of this Congress and inspired others to join the movement for change.

I thank her for her incredible service and leadership, and I wish her well in this next chapter.

RECOGNIZING MY LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, GRIFFIN WONG, FOR HIS EXCELLENT WORK ON BEHALF OF MINNESOTA'S THIRD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

### HON. DEAN PHILLIPS

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 12, 2024*

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my Legislative Director, Griffin Wong, for his work on behalf of every constituent in Minnesota's Third Congressional District. I am thrilled that the end of my time in Congress will not be the end of Griffin's service to the district, as he will now become the Legislative Director for my successor, Congresswoman-elect Kelly Morrison. I could not be more proud or grateful for his service.

Hailing from Montgomery County, Maryland, Griffin had an early introduction to life on the Hill. His mother worked for Congressman Bill Lipinski of Illinois when he was young, laying the groundwork for him to live a life of service. After graduating from Boston College in 2017, he set off to Phoenix, Arizona to teach at Brophy College Preparatory. In addition to teaching there he also coached tennis and ran their immigration advocacy program.

Griffin started his work in government in the Massachusetts State Senate before moving over to the U.S. Senate for Senator CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, and then to the U.S. House of Representatives in my office. Griffin has spent most of his career working on banking and small business issues. During his tenure as

my Legislative Assistant, he guided my role as the Vice-Ranking Member of the House Committee on Small Business as well as co-chair of the House Entrepreneurship Caucus and House Stakeholder Capitalism Caucus. Griffin took over as my Legislative Director during a pivotal moment in our office and has shown strong initiative in directing my entire legislative agenda.

Griffin has grown into a valuable team leader during his time in the office. From tackling particular legislative issues to now directing the legislative agenda, he has done so with a sense of humor and practicality that is admirable. He stepped up when the office needed him the most. As a Legislative Director, Griffin brings a calm and collected energy, giving staff a sense of ease and confidence that the job will be accomplished. Griffin is one of the hardest workers I know. No matter how busy he might be, he will take the time for a phone call from a colleague or a meeting with a constituent because he cares so deeply about this work. His instincts, critical thinking, and thoughtfulness have made him a strong leader and manager. He is a trusted advisor, a fierce advocate for his team, and a committed public servant for our constituents.

The people of Minnesota's Third Congressional District were lucky to have his dedication and leadership, and I'm extraordinarily happy that he will continue to do this work and serve the Nation and people of Minnesota's Third Congressional District. I wish Griffin all the best in his future endeavors and thank him for six years of faithful service to this Nation—and many more to come.