

RECOGNIZING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE METRA COMMUTER RAIL SYSTEM

HON. BRADLEY SCOTT SCHNEIDER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2024

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, today I proudly rise to recognize the 40th Anniversary of the Metra rail system serving the people throughout Chicago and across the region.

The Metra commuter rail system—specifically the Milwaukee District North, the Union Pacific North, and the North Central Service lines—connects Illinois's 10th district to the city of Chicago and neighboring communities. From Winthrop Harbor through Zion, Waukegan, North Chicago, Lake Bluff, Lake Forest, Highwood, Highland Park, Glencoe, Winnetka, and Kenilworth; from Antioch through Lake Villa, Round Lake Beach, Grayslake, Libertyville, Mundelein, Vernon Hills, Vernon Township, Buffalo Grove, and Wheeling; and from Fox Lake through Long Lake, Round Lake, Deerfield, and Northbrook, Metra is literally a lifeline for the citizens of the 10th District.

Metra began as an amalgamation of private rail services, some of which had existed for more than a century. Today, Metra is the fourth-busiest commuter rail system in the country and serves millions of riders throughout the region with eleven lines moving between 243 stations. Metra serves as a critical backbone for workers and families who depend on reliable, safe transportation through the frigid winter and sweltering summers. Metra is more than just a commuter rail system—it is an indelible feature of life in Chicagoland, serving workers, sports fans, students, the elderly, and many more.

I have been honored to consistently advocate for Metra's priorities during my service in Congress, and proud to have secured funding for projects for station modernization, accessibility improvements, and platform rehabilitation. These historic investments in our transportation infrastructure—made possible under the Biden Administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law—will help Metra flourish well into the future.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the accomplishments and service Metra, and the people who ensure the trains run, have provided for the past 40 years. To the engineers, conductors, planners, maintenance workers, advocates, and organizational leaders who dedicated countless hours over the decades to elevate Metra to where it is today—I thank and commend them for their vision and hard work. I look forward to continuing my work with Metra to promote its continued success—not just for the good of the Tenth District, but for all the people in the Chicago region.

RECOGNIZING METRA COMMUTER RAILROAD'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JONATHAN L. JACKSON

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2024

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Metra, the commuter

railroad serving my constituents in Chicago, on its 40th anniversary.

Forty years ago, commuter rail operations largely relied on private railroads. However, due to inflation and the emergence of alternative transportation options, funding decreased significantly, and riders threatened to discontinue their use of commuter services. To address this issue, voters approved the creation of the Regional Transportation Authority, which established the Northeast Illinois Railroad Corporation to directly operate the trains. When the Rock Island and Milwaukee Road railroads went bankrupt, a new rail division was created to provide subsidies that kept the trains running and passengers on board.

As Metra faced a fragmented system of commuter rail operations, it acquired the Metra Electric and Illinois Central Gulf in 1987, ultimately taking over the operations of the Heritage Corridor, SouthWest Service, and North Central Service—marking the first new commuter line in Chicago in 70 years.

Today, Metra continues to subsidize operations on four lines owned and operated by freight railroads. After 40 years, Metra has become the fourth-busiest commuter rail system in our country, consistently providing reliable and essential transportation services to my constituents.

Earlier this year, I was pleased to assist Metra in securing federal funding for the Morgan Street Bridge Replacement project. This funding will replace the current timber rail bridge, built in 1974 as a temporary solution, with a new steel bridge. This upgrade will reduce maintenance needs and enhance safety and reliability for nearly 7.34 million annual riders.

I urge my colleagues to join me in congratulating Metra on its 40th anniversary. I look forward to continuing our partnership to ensure Metra's success for many years to come.

CELEBRATING JOHN M. BARR'S CAREER AND SERVICE, YPSILANTI, MICHIGAN

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2024

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the retirement of John M. Barr and his dedication to the legal profession. As City Attorney of Ypsilanti, Michigan for decades and founder of Barr, Anhut and Associates, P.C., John's commitment to serving his community is worthy of commendation.

John attended Michigan State University where he earned a Bachelor of Art in Social Science. He then earned his J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School. Throughout his successful legal career, John has been admitted into the State Bar of Michigan, the U.S. Federal District Court, the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court. Outside of the law, John heroically served his country as member of the United States Army.

John has served as City Attorney for Ypsilanti since 1981. For over 43 years, he has served as the chief legal advisor to the City Council, Manager, and various city departments. As a testament to his dedication to the community, John founded Barr, Anhut and As-

sociates, P.C., which focuses on municipal law, estate planning/probate, real estate, and corporate law. His firm often provides bar recommended pro-bono services and John has always expected his staff to be active members of their community through volunteering and other service.

Outside of his career, John has personally served in numerous community organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, and Washtenaw 100. He currently serves as board member of HighScope Educational Research Foundation, which aims to provide high-quality, equitable early childhood education to every child. He also serves as a board member of the Michigan Municipal League Foundation, which aims to create financial security among local communities to address individual social and economic needs across a wide set of industries.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in celebrating the magnificent career of John M. Barr and congratulating him on his retirement. His dedication to the city of Ypsilanti and the broader Michigan community has created a more just and equitable community for all. I thank John for his decades of service to our community, and we wish him all the best as he moves on to the next chapter of his life.

CELEBRATING DR. VENU GOVINDARAJU AS PERSON OF THE YEAR BY THE COUNCIL OF HERITAGE AND ARTS OF INDIA

HON. TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2024

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate Dr. Venu Govindaraju as Person of the Year by the Council of Heritage and Arts of India. Dr. Govindaraju, a renowned professor and Vice President for Research and Economic Development at the University at Buffalo, is a trailblazer whose pioneering research has transformed artificial intelligence and document analysis, leaving an indelible mark on technological innovation and societal progress.

At a time when the practice of artificial intelligence seemed far-fetched, Dr. Govindaraju led a team that developed the world's first autonomous system for deciphering handwritten addresses. Initially funded by the U.S. Postal Service, this comprehensive technology processes mail at a staggering speed of 13 pieces per second, interpreting natural handwriting mail in the United States, with no additional guidelines, structured forms, or meticulously printed text. Subsequently adopted by the Australia Post and the UK Royal Mail, the system now reads nearly all the handwritten mail in the United States. Its efficiency stands as a cornerstone achievement in artificial intelligence.

The impact of Dr. Govindaraju's work extends far beyond postal automation. His contributions have overarched in diverse fields such as digital libraries, healthcare, and education. For the New York State Department of Health, his techniques have enabled early detection of illness outbreaks through automated healthcare analysis. Currently, as Director and Principal Investigator of the National Institute for Exceptional Education, he is leading a National Science Foundation-funded initiative to

develop AI tools for early screening of children with Dysgraphia and Dyslexia. This groundbreaking project aims to provide teachers with AI-based intervention tools to efficiently help them overcome their limitations.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating Dr. Venu Govindaraju as Person of the Year by the Council of Heritage and Arts of India. His contributions have not only advanced AI research but also demonstrated its profound impact on industries and communities. Dr. Govindaraju's leadership exemplifies the transformative power of science, innovation, and technology in addressing real-world challenges that have left an indelible mark on our city, and we are all the better for it.

REMEMBERING MARY HAMMER, A PIVOTAL FOUNDER OF MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY RESOURCES

HON. JIMMY PANETTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2024

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in memory of Mary Hammer, a beloved community leader. She was a steadfast advocate for families in the San Lorenzo Valley and founded the Mountain Community Resources, originally known as the Valley Resource Center. Originally from Alameda, Ms. Hammer embodied our community values of positivity and hard work.

Ms. Hammer attended UC Berkeley, and shortly after graduating, she traveled abroad to teach in Germany where she met her husband, Joe. In 1965 Mary and Joe settled in the San Lorenzo Valley, a place very dear to Mary. She began teaching in San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District leaving a lasting impact on those she taught. While raising her family, Ms. Hammer quickly began to become an active leader in her community.

Engaging in local political campaigns, her efforts not only safeguarded vital water resources but also played a key role in shaping Santa Cruz County. As an environmentalist, her leadership was vital for emergency responses when a devastating flood and storms barreled through the community in 1982 and 1983. Mary's dedicated advocacy pushed local leaders to prioritize emergency preparedness, setting the stage for the Neighborhood Survival Network and Volunteer Emergency Preparedness Project.

Her leadership at Valley Resource Center as the center's first Executive Director guided the community through multiple natural disasters and paved the way for the center to transform from a volunteer-led organization to a nonprofit. Ms. Hammer Received the Outstanding Public Service Award from FEMA in Washington, D.C., which was one of many achievements she would go on to receive.

As a founding leader of the Valley Women's Club of San Lorenzo Valley, Ms. Hammer championed efforts for natural resource preservation and disaster preparedness. Today, Mountain Community Resources provides essential services such as food, clothing, counseling, legal assistance, and parenting classes to residents in need.

Mary loved being with family and friends, teaching, reading, and exploring nature as an avid cyclist, camper, and hiker. Mary is sur-

vived by her children, Eric and Lisa, and her grandchildren, Ruby, Charlie, and Nicole. She now joins her beloved husband, Joe, whom she fondly called "Joey."

COMMENDING COMMISSIONER WAYNE GOODWIN

HON. WILEY NICKEL

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2024

Mr. NICKEL. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to recognize Wayne Goodwin, a dedicated public servant whose exemplary work as Commissioner of the North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles has made a lasting impact on our state.

Wayne Goodwin has served North Carolina in many capacities, including four terms in the State House and eight years as Commissioner of Insurance. Since being appointed DMV Commissioner in 2022, he has tackled the challenges of a demanding agency with leadership, vision, and a commitment to improving services for all North Carolinians.

Under Commissioner Goodwin's leadership, the DMV has seen significant progress. He's made customer service a top priority, implementing extended business hours, introducing DMV self-service kiosks, and expanding online services. These innovations have reduced wait times and provided more convenience for citizens across the state. His efforts to address the agency's staffing shortages, reducing a 30 percent vacancy rate to 12 percent, speak to his dedication to supporting state employees.

A native of Hamlet and a Morehead Scholar at UNC-Chapel Hill, Wayne Goodwin's longstanding dedication to public service, from his time as a young lawmaker to his leadership at the DMV, has greatly benefited our state.

I'm honored to recognize Wayne Goodwin for his extraordinary service and the lasting contributions he's made to the people of North Carolina.

RECOGNIZING MICHELLE HINES

HON. BRETT GUTHRIE

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2024

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Michelle Hines on her retirement from 33 years of working in community service with the Barren River Area Development District (BRADD).

A Logan County native, Michelle was born, raised, and resides in Auburn, Kentucky. After graduating from Logan County High School and Western Kentucky University, Michelle's first job out of college was with the Barren River Area Development District. In her tenure, which spans over three decades, Michelle has been a faithful servant to her community, advocating and supporting citizens throughout the region she oversees. She has been part of many critical initiatives including supporting the 2021 Tornado Relief fund, countless food drives, and BRADD's Veterans Directed Care Services expansion.

Mrs. Hines can best be described by all who know her as devoted, humble, and ready to

act. Her devotion throughout her career has inspired many people and enriched the lives of countless constituents. I want to thank Michelle for her work that has put the needs of others first and give recognition to her tenured career as she enjoys retirement spending more time with her husband, Kevin, and daughter, Rachel.

RECOGNIZING MY 2024 FALL IN- TERN CLASS FOR THEIR SERV- ICE TO ILLINOIS' 13TH CONGRES- SIONAL DISTRICT

HON. NIKKI BUDZINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2024

Ms. BUDZINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding class of interns who supported my office during the Fall 2024 term. Whether they were working in the bustling U.S. Capitol or amongst the cornfields of Illinois, their contributions to Illinois' 13th Congressional District have made a significant impact.

In my Washington Office, I was honored to work alongside Daryl Salinas, Wedad Osman, Stella Linn, and Sophia Hinich. These four interns have worked tirelessly to support my staff, skillfully navigating the complexities of working on Capitol Hill. They have been instrumental in managing direct correspondence with our constituents, drafting numerous memos and letters, and assisting with in-depth policy research. I am especially grateful for their work in preparing my office to transition to the 119th Congress.

Back in Illinois, I was honored to work with Avery Martin in my Champaign Office. Her commitment to constituent service by assisting my casework team has been tremendous, and I applaud her for the dedication she showed to the people of Central and Southern Illinois while also being a full-time student at the University of Illinois.

The impact that these five individuals left in my office will be felt for years to come as we transition to the 119th Congress, and we will be very sad to say farewell to this spectacular group of interns. I thank Daryl, Wedad, Stella, Sophia, and Avery for their service. I wish them all the best as they continue their professional and academic journeys.

HONORING STATE REPRESENTA- TIVE ESTHER HAYWOOD

HON. CORI BUSH

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2024

Ms. BUSH. Mr. Speaker, I along with the people of St. Louis, rise today to honor the extraordinary life of Esther Jean Hill Haywood, a trailblazer, educator, public servant, and unwavering advocate for civil rights and social justice. Born in Memphis, Tennessee on January 15, 1940, Esther's early commitment to service shaped a lifetime of transformational contributions to her community and our nation. She dedicated herself to fostering equity in education, leading initiatives for underserved youth, and tirelessly advocating for social