

HONORING THE CONTINUED SERVICE OF LIEUTENANT COMMANDER DARREN SILL

**HON. JOE COURTNEY**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 17, 2024*

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the contributions of Lieutenant Commander Darren Sill, United States Navy, during his outstanding service as a legislative fellow in my Washington, D.C. office this year. Throughout 2024, Darren has played a critical role in supporting my work on the House Armed Services Committee and representing the proud Navy community in eastern Connecticut.

As Ranking Member of the House Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee, which has the solemn, critical duty of overseeing much of our Nation's Navy, Marine Corps, and various Air Force programs and policies, his perspective and helpful insights were essential to me and my office's work. Year in, and year out, the Department of Defense's legislative fellowship program brings highly talented individuals to Capitol Hill who provide invaluable benefits to Members of the House and Senate defense committees. Officers, like Darren, bring real-world experience from their time in the classroom at the various academies and experiences from their time serving on active duty. This year, as our subcommittee actively worked to shape our Nation's critical shipbuilding programs, particularly focused on the pursuit to add another Virginia Class submarine to the budget in the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act, Darren provided exquisite judgement in navigating the landscape of crafting such a large and critical piece of legislation.

Darren has also seized initiative in a variety of areas beyond naval affairs that benefit eastern Connecticut. He worked tirelessly to provide insight into our Navy's planned shipbuilding programs, visited with leadership at Naval Submarine New London to discuss ongoing installation and submarine force operations, toured General Dynamics Electric Boat Shipyard, focused on submarine industrial base issues crucial to sustaining the Navy's fleet, and gained first-hand experience in Connecticut's substantial aerospace industrial base. He also used his recent shore assignment as a department head aboard the USS *Texas* (SSN 775) to provide invaluable insight on the Navy's submarine maintenance and sustainment capacity throughout the calendar year, providing a unique perspective on the challenges at our public shipyards. Lastly, he engaged in persistent communication with the embassies of Australia and the United Kingdom to facilitate various engagements in my office and around Capitol Hill and, most importantly, leveraged those relationships as Congress continued oversight of the trilateral AUKUS security agreement.

Darren's work ethic, diligence, intelligence, and first-hand experience as a Submarine Officer made an immediate benefit and memorable impact on my office and subcommittee staff. He was also an energetic, affable colleague to my entire congressional staff, willing to help in small ways and big ways to serve the constituents of Connecticut's 2nd Congressional District. His thoughtfulness on issues

outside of his Navy portfolio were much appreciated by the whole team, and they will be friends for life.

After his Junior Officer tour aboard USS *Scranton* (SSN 756), a department head tour on USS *Texas* (SSN 775), a tour at the Pentagon with N133, and numerous stints in Groton at the Submarine Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, I am thankful for his family's tremendous sacrifice to our Nation and for landing in the District of Columbia for the current phase of their life. Though Darren's presence will be deeply missed by both my personal staff and Seapower staff, I know full-well that he will make his presence known as he heads back to the Pentagon to serve in the Secretary of the Navy's office as Director of White House and Congressional Affairs. I look forward to seeing Darren back in Groton when he attends the Submarine Command Course to prepare himself for command assignments in our Nation's submarine force.

Mr. Speaker, as has also been the case for each of his predecessors that my office has had the opportunity to host, I have benefited greatly from Darren's training and background. This recurring process that the fellowship program fosters, strengthens civilian-military understanding for future leaders of the greatest military in the world, which I believe is a necessary component of a strong democracy. Our Nation is best served at sea and here onshore by officers and leaders of the highest caliber, like Darren. He embodies such qualities and has a promising career ahead in continued service to our Nation, and we owe him such gratitude. To that end, I ask that the House join me in wishing LCDR Darren Sill, his wife Andi, and their two children, Dawson and McKenna, the best of luck in their next life chapter.

RECOGNIZING KAZAKHSTAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

**HON. JIMMY PANETTA**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 17, 2024*

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the 33rd Independence Day of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan's Independence Day, celebrated on December 16, represents the fulfillment of a long-cherished dream: a sovereign nation charting its own course in the modern world. It is a day to honor the heroes who played instrumental roles in achieving independence and shaping a vision of freedom and self-determination for Kazakhstan for future generations.

On December 16, 1991, Kazakhstan declared its independence, officially breaking away from the Soviet Union. The United States, recognizing the significance of this achievement, was among the first nations to acknowledge Kazakhstan's sovereignty on December 25, 1991. Furthermore, the United States demonstrated its commitment by opening its embassy in January 1992 and has consistently emphasized its support for Kazakhstan's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity.

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has emerged as a respected member of the international community. The nation has fos-

tered diplomatic relations, contributed to global peace and security, and driven economic development. The relationship between Kazakhstan and the United States has grown robust and wide-ranging, further strengthened by the Enhanced Strategic Partnership.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's dedication to political and societal reforms is particularly commendable. Despite external challenges, Kazakhstan has remained a peaceful and stabilizing force in Central Asia, demonstrating its commitment to democracy and civilizational orientation toward the West.

Kazakhstan remains one of the United States' most reliable and trusted partners, both regionally and globally, particularly as an active member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This long-standing partnership underscores the importance of advancing efforts to establish Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR), serving as a pragmatic acknowledgment of the progress Kazakhstan has made and a necessary step to reinforce America's strategic relationship with Central Asia.

Looking ahead, the United States and Kazakhstan are ready to strengthen their partnership through ongoing dialogue, trade, and cooperation on mutual objectives. Together, we remain dedicated to promoting peace, security, and prosperity, both in Central Asia and across the globe.

HONORING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION'S TRIUMPH AT RIVA RIDGE

**HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 17, 2024*

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor the 80th anniversary of the 10th Mountain Division's heroic role in the Battle of Riva Ridge.

Eighty years ago, the United States and its allies waged a historic campaign to liberate Europe from Nazi Germany. Pivotal to these efforts, were the brave soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division who embarked on the formidable mission of breaching the German Gothic Line, a 108-mile-long defensive barrier stretching across the Apennine Mountains in northern Italy. Breaking through this line was vital for the Allied forces to advance across Europe and retake control of the continent. The Germans held the strategic high ground allowing them to dominate key terrain, obstruct Allied assaults, and block critical supply routes in Europe. The Allies determined that the only path forward was to scale the ice and snow-covered cliffs of Riva Ridge, which stood thousands of feet above the valley where the 10th Mountain Division was stationed.

The Germans believed these cliffs were insurmountable. However, they underestimated the determination, versatility, and unparalleled skill of the 10th Mountain Division, a regiment composed of elite mountaineers, trappers, and outdoorsmen who trained and were battle-ready in the rugged Colorado Rockies.

In the evening of February 18, 1945, 700 soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division ascended the treacherous, ice-covered slopes of Riva Ridge. Moving under the cover of darkness and a concealing fog, they scaled 2,000

feet to confront the unsuspecting enemy. Catching the Germans off guard as they slept in their dugouts, the 10th Mountain Division successfully seized the ridge. They defended their hard-won position for five grueling days, enduring heavy fighting that claimed the lives of 17 American soldiers and left 51 others wounded. In nearly five months, they faced off against 100,000 German troops, ultimately liberating the Po River Valley which led to freeing Italy. The courage and sacrifice demonstrated by the soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division is truly inspiring. Their bravery in overcoming extreme adversity remains a powerful example of valor and determination.

Under the leadership of 10th Mountain Division's former Commanding General Gregory K. Anderson and the current Commanding General Scott M. Nauman, the 10th Mountain Division is valiantly returning to their Alpine roots to ensure the U.S. Army is ready to fight in diverse, mountainous terrains, just as they did 80 years ago.

On behalf of New York's 21st district, we honor the 10th Mountain Division's heroic actions at the Battle of Riva Ridge and celebrate their enduring legacy of service and sacrifice on this 80th anniversary.

#### RECOGNIZING PA-1's HOMETOWN HEROES: THE QUEEN BEES

**HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 17, 2024*

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize extraordinary individuals from Pennsylvania's First Congressional District—people who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration that I recognize the Queen Bees Group:

Helen Irvine, Kelly Kemmerer, Robin Kemmerer, Missy Kitzmiller, Christina Swain.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolades but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their unwavering integrity, the strength of their character, and their steadfast commitment to the people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon which our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and, in doing so, call us all to higher standards of service and compassion. The Queen Bees have embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

As co-founders of the Langhorne-Levittown-based non-profit, The Queen Bees, this remarkable all-female organization has not only served our community but transformed countless lives. They have dedicated their time and efforts to uplift those in the community facing adversity, channeling their collective strength towards a singular mission: creating positive change for those in need. Constituents like The Queen Bees strengthen the fabric of our district and prove that when driven by purpose, compassion, and a resolute sense of duty, individuals can leave a lasting and profound impact on an entire community.

In times of uncertainty, it is the work of organizations like The Queen Bees that reminds us of the strength of the human spirit. Their service, given without expectation of recogni-

tion, stands as a testament to the belief that one individual's dedication can ripple through the lives of many, sparking change, fostering resilience, and inspiring hope. Today, we honor The Queen Bees not just for their remarkable deeds, but for who they are—true heroes, in every sense of the word.

Mr. Speaker, it is through the work of organizations like The Queen Bees that our communities thrive, and our Nation grows stronger. Their actions remind us that progress is not forged in grand gestures, but in the cumulative power of selfless acts. They embody the timeless American values of resilience, generosity, and compassion, showing us that the future is built by those who care deeply, act decisively, and give without hesitation.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to The Queen Bees for their extraordinary service. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring these exceptional individuals, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May their example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.

#### HONORING MASTER GUNNERY SERGEANT ARTHUR "ARTIE" ALLEN, III, UNITED STATES MA- RINE CORPS

**HON. MARK TAKANO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 17, 2024*

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Master Gunnery Sergeant Arthur "Artie" Allen, III for his unwavering service to our Nation and his exemplary commitment to veterans and the community. Throughout his distinguished 26-year career in the United States Marine Corps, Artie has demonstrated remarkable leadership, sacrifice, and dedication. Upon retiring from active duty, he has continued his legacy of service through an extraordinary range of volunteerism, outreach, and community involvement.

Artie's professional affiliations include roles such as Chairman and District 3 Appointee of the Riverside County Veterans' Advisory Committee, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Life Member & Trustee of Post 4089, Temecula Valley, and Life Member of the Marine Corps League, Southwest Riverside County Detachment 1057. His commitment to veterans and their families is exemplified through his involvement with the Veterans Experience Committee at VA Loma Linda Medical Center & Healthcare System and his service as a Docent for the Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego Museum Foundation.

In addition to his professional contributions, Artie has dedicated countless hours to volunteerism, serving as a key figure in numerous veterans' organizations and community outreach programs. From participating in "Buddy Poppy" drives, organizing events for the City of Menifee, and volunteering at Homeless Veterans Stand Downs, to his involvement with "Homes For Our Troops" and numerous Veterans Expos, Artie's tireless efforts have positively impacted the lives of veterans, active military, and their families.

Artie has also been recognized for his volunteerism with awards such as the President's

Volunteer Service Award at both the Bronze and Silver levels and the prestigious Riverside Area Veteran Honoree Program award. His leadership in the veteran community and his dedication to preserving the stories and legacies of service members is further illustrated through his work with "King High Remembers" and various speaking engagements.

After years of dedicated service, both in uniform and in his community, I am pleased to wish Master Gunnery Sergeant Arthur Allen, III a happy and well-deserved retirement. His lifelong commitment to our country and our veterans is an inspiration to us all.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing and celebrating the life, service, and contributions of Master Gunnery Sergeant Arthur "Artie" Allen, III. We thank him for his sacrifices, his leadership, and his ongoing legacy of service to our great Nation. Happy retirement, Artie.

#### CELEBRATING IRONTON FOOTBALL'S STATE TITLE

**HON. BRAD R. WENSTRUP**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 17, 2024*

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the incredible football season of the 2024 Ironton Tigers, capping it off with a 28–17 victory over Liberty Center in the Division 5 State Championship. This is Ironton High School's third state title and their first in thirty-five years.

Finishing the season with a fifteen and one record, the Tigers outscored their opponents by nearly six hundred points throughout the season as they dominated teams from Southern Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky.

Led by Senior quarterback, Brayden Schreck, and Senior wide receiver, Shaun Terry, the duo combined for twenty-three receiving touchdowns, more than half of Schreck's season total of thirty-seven. Terry finished the season with more than 1,500 yards, ranking him in the top twenty-five nationally for reception yards.

I am so proud of the Ironton Tigers' phenomenal season, and I am even more proud of how they distinguished themselves with a victory in the state final. The Ironton School District's motto is "To Teach, To Nurture, To Serve" and now they can add "To Win" to the list as well.

Congratulations to all of the Ironton community and especially to the coaches and athletes that made this victory possible.

#### HONORING MAYOR RONALD KOTT

**HON. MIKE THOMPSON**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 17, 2024*

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ronald "Ron" Kott for his years of exceptional service and contributions to our City of Rio Vista as both a city council member and mayor.

Mayor Kott's career in public service began in 2014 when he was elected to the Rio Vista City Council. With decades of professional experience in the financial sector, Mayor Kott