

week, the House of Representatives will consider the Transportation Security Screening Modernization Act.

This legislation addresses a long-standing issue affecting transportation workers like truck drivers, pipeline operators, longshoremen, and warehouse managers. These workers are often required to obtain multiple TSA-managed credentials, each with different expiration dates, fees, and redundant background checks. Not only is this process duplicative and time-consuming, but workers also bear the financial burden of maintaining these credentials, preventing them from fully participating in the workforce.

The Transportation Security Screening Modernization Act cuts through red tape by allowing workers to apply existing valid background checks to multiple credentialing programs. This will significantly reduce costs and administrative hassle for these essential workers.

Mr. Hurst, a former truck driver and Teamster, met with my office to share his expertise and firsthand experience with this issue. His advocacy played a key role in shaping this bipartisan, commonsense legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as the House considers this critical legislation, I want to thank Mr. Hurst again for his leadership on this matter. It is an honor representing him in Congress, and I am proud that this legislation has passed the Senate and is on its way to becoming law, bringing much-needed relief to our Nation's transportation workers.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF JUDGE LAURINE BLAKE

HON. PAT FALLON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

Mr. FALLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Judge Laurine J. "Lauri" Blake of Bonham, Texas. Judge Blake has faithfully dedicated herself to serving and protecting our community.

Judge Blake received her bachelor's degree in criminal justice studies from the University of North Dakota in 1987. She began her distinguished public service career as a police officer for the City of Dallas after graduating at the top of her police academy class. In 1993, Judge Blake earned her Juris Doctor from Southern Methodist University School of Law and was selected to serve as the Assistant Criminal District Attorney for Collin County. Over the next eleven years, she rose up the ranks to become the First Assistant District Attorney in Grayson County and successfully helped prosecute numerous criminals to keep our communities safe.

In 2004, Judge Blake was elected as District Judge for the 336th Judicial District Court in Fannin County, making history as the first female judge elected to this district court. Under her leadership, she established a rehabilitation program for parolees struggling with addiction and worked closely with Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates to protect child welfare. For her outstanding work, she received the Better Leader Award from the Texoma Council of Governments and the Texas CASA Judicial Innovation and Leadership Award. I am pleased to recognize Judge Blake today

for the positive impact she has made on our community.

I have requested the United States flag to be flown over our Nation's Capitol in recognition of Judge Blake's exceptional service to the people of North Texas. I thank her for all she has done.

CELEBRATING THE SERVICE OF THE HONORABLE MICHAEL C. BURGESS

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL T. MCCAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

Mr. MCCAUL. Madam Speaker, it's a privilege to recognize my colleague and dear friend, Congressman MICHAEL BURGESS. For over 20 years, Dr. BURGESS has served with dedication, determination and an unbreakable commitment to his constituents, Texas, and to our great nation.

When MICHAEL came to Congress, he brought with him a physician's expertise, a sharp intellect, and a deep sense of duty. But beyond those skills, he brought something rare in this chamber: humility and grace. Whether working on complex healthcare policies, immigration issues or standing up for his district, MICHAEL has always been a steady hand and a thoughtful voice.

I've seen MICHAEL's leadership firsthand, especially when he stepped up to chair the powerful Rules Committee. In his first act as the Rules Committee chairman, he achieved something remarkable—passing the most bipartisan rule in congressional history. That's pretty rare. In fact, I think it may be the first and only time.

But MICHAEL's impact goes beyond the Rules Committee and legislative wins. His work with families, especially those facing life's hardest battles, speaks volumes about his character.

MICHAEL worked with me and joined the Congressional Childhood Cancer Caucus that I chair, to help pursue legislation that would bring new and innovative care to help eradicate childhood cancer. He introduced me to Sadie Keller, a Childhood Cancer survivor and my star lobbyist. Together, we wrote a book called *Better Angels*, detailing our journey together. MICHAEL helped me give a voice to fighters like Sadie, who never had a voice in Congress. As a physician, he knew the importance of fighting for these children. His work with the Childhood Cancer Caucus has brought hope to so many, and that's a legacy we will never forget.

MICHAEL's intellect, judgment, and his demeanor will be missed. He has shown us what it means to serve with integrity and dedication.

I thank him for his service, his friendship, and his unwavering commitment to the House of Representatives, Texas, and the United States.

HONOR AND PRIVILEGE TO SERVE THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO

HON. JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Mr. Speaker, for the last eight years, I've had the privilege and honor to serve the people of Puerto Rico as their sole Member of Congress.

During this time, we faced significant challenges. In early September 2017, a few months into my first term, Puerto Rico was hit by Hurricane Irma, followed two weeks later by Hurricane Maria—the strongest hurricane to make landfall on the Island in over 80 years—which completely devastated our communities, destroyed our infrastructure, and produced the largest power blackout in U.S. history.

In late 2019, Puerto Rico's southern region began experiencing a seismic sequence that ended with a 6.4 magnitude earthquake on January 7th, 2020. This further damaged public and private infrastructure and left residents of the area in a constant state of fear and uncertainty.

And in 2020, like the rest of the world, we were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

These were all formidable challenges for Puerto Rico that needed to be addressed with a strong sense of urgency, and we met them head-on.

Working alongside my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, we secured historic levels of federal funding to assist Puerto Rico's recovery process. These include nearly \$73.5 billion in hurricane-relief funding, \$1.6 billion to address the impact of the earthquakes, and close to \$44.1 billion in pandemic relief allocations.

As we worked to respond to these emergencies, we also had to focus on other competing but equally important priorities. Chief among them was addressing the Medicaid funding gap that provides health care coverage for 1.5 million residents in Puerto Rico.

I'm proud that during my time in Congress we were able to secure \$29.5 billion to stabilize Puerto Rico's Medicaid program while increasing the federal matching rate, more recently from 55 to 76 percent.

I'm also proud that we were able to address longstanding disparities under federal programs to help combat poverty and grow the economy. For example, we were able to include Puerto Rico in the Child Tax Credit for families with one or two children, who did not previously qualify, and secured a \$600 million annual federal funding allocation to supplement the Island's local Earned Income Tax Credit.

I'm also pleased to have secured \$33.7 million in Community Project Funding for 29 local projects across Puerto Rico. And as a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I supported the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, under which Puerto Rico is expected to receive at least \$2.2 billion over five years.

I've also introduced legislation to provide the Island equal treatment under critical programs like SNAP, Medicaid and Medicare, SSI, and EITC.

I've led efforts to resolve our political status dilemma and end our territorial status. This is

the underlying reason behind most of the social, economic, and fiscal challenges we've faced and what allows the federal government to treat our 3.2 million American citizens unequally under federal laws and programs.

I led negotiations on the Puerto Rico Status Act, which passed the House with bipartisan support in December 2022 and would have authorized a binding plebiscite among the constitutionally viable, nonterritorial status options—statehood or independence.

This bill served as the basis for the local referendum held this past November 5th, in which Puerto Rico supported statehood with 57 percent of the votes. This is the fourth time since 2012 that we have voted to express our desire to become a permanent part of the Union.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the issues I have worked on, but I just want to thank the people of Puerto Rico for giving me the opportunity to serve as their voice in Congress.

I also thank my colleagues, who've worked with me, visited the Island, and have taken the time to understand and support our needs and federal priorities.

I thank my family, especially my husband, José, and our children, who inspire me to work harder every day.

There is much to be done and much progress to look forward to in Puerto Rico. As I begin to serve as Governor early next year, I look forward to remaining engaged with Congress to continue advocating for the Island, responsibly expedite the use of recovery funds, and foster economic growth.

**HONORING DR. DANIEL N. BAKER
FOR THREE DECADES OF OUT-
STANDING LEADERSHIP AND
SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT**

HON. JOE NEGUSE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

Mr. NEGUSE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of Dr. Daniel N. Baker, who, for the last three decades, has served as the Director of the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics (LASP), one of the longest-established and top-funded research institutes at the University of Colorado Boulder. In this position, Director Baker has been instrumental in advancing LASP and the university into an epicenter of space science research and aerospace workforce development crucial to Colorado and our Nation.

Director Baker simultaneously serves as a professor in three University of Colorado Boulder departments, including Astrophysical and Planetary Sciences, Aerospace Engineering Sciences, and Physics. During his tenure, Director Baker has published more than 900 papers, edited nine books, and won numerous prestigious awards for his research and leadership. He also has continuously contributed to the international advancement of topics in space physics.

Director Baker has built LASP into one of the top academic space research centers and the only one in the world to send an instrument to explore every planet in our solar system. Under his leadership, LASP grew from approximately 180 to 750 employees, about

one-quarter of whom are students. Over the years, the institute has provided hands-on training on numerous NASA missions for hundreds of CU Boulder students. Some of these students have returned to LASP as employees, while others now work at NASA centers and in aerospace businesses across the country, extending Director Baker's legacy for decades to come.

Under his guidance, CU's laboratory has helped revolutionize our understanding of the cosmos, conducting numerous important missions, including NASA's Cassini mission to Saturn, the New Horizons mission to Pluto, and SNOE, one of the space agency's first small satellite missions.

Director Baker's contributions will continue to be felt in Colorado, across the country, and throughout the world for decades to come. I want to congratulate him as he shifts to a new focus on space policy at the university and thank him for his stellar service to our community, Colorado, and the Nation.

**HONORING REPRESENTATIVE
CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS**

HON. DAN NEWHOUSE

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize a dedicated leader, public servant, and good friend—Congresswoman CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS.

For nearly two decades, CATHY has been a champion for the people of Washington's 5th Congressional District and a powerful voice for rural America. From delivering for our veterans to advancing clean energy initiatives, she has left a lasting mark on our Nation.

Outside of her hard work as a Member of Congress, CATHY is a good friend. Over the years, we have joined forces in protecting the Pacific Northwest's hydropower operations and even hosted a high-turnout "Save the Dams" rally together in 2022 for the Lower Snake River Dams. I'll never forget shaking cowbells as we rallied the public behind our precious dams.

As she begins her well-deserved retirement, I extend my gratitude for all the work she has done for the Washington Delegation and wish her the very best for this next chapter of her life. I thank CATHY, for her service to our Nation and the communities across Washington's 5th Congressional District. She will be missed.

**TRIBUTE TO CONGRESSMAN JOHN
MCKEE SPRATT, JR.**

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a great South Carolinian and good friend. Congressman John McKee Spratt, Jr. transitioned to eternal rest on December 14, 2024, in York, South Carolina. His compassion, generosity, and wisdom will be remembered and cherished by all who were fortunate to meet him.

John Spratt was born on November 1, 1942. He grew up in York, South Carolina, a small

mill town where his family has roots dating back to the Revolutionary War. John was a precocious child, known for his inquisitiveness and curiosity. After graduating from York High School in 1960, where he served as Student Body President, John attended Davidson College and pursued a degree in history. John's peers at Davidson saw the same intellect in him as his friends did in York, and similarly elected him Student Body President of the university. After graduating, he studied philosophy, politics, and economics on a Marshall Scholarship at Oxford University before attending Yale Law School in 1966. Following law school, he served three years as an Army Captain at the Pentagon, earning a Meritorious Service Medal. In 1971, John returned home to York to practice law at his father's firm and pursue various business interests. Over the next decade, he became a leader in the York community.

John's exposure to politics came at a young age. His father was an influential figure in the York County and South Carolina Democratic Parties, and he encouraged John's participation in the political process. Although John served as a delegate to the 1964 Democratic National Convention, it wasn't until nearly two decades later, in 1982, that he pursued elected office. When Representative Ken Holland of South Carolina's 5th Congressional District decided not to seek reelection, John won the Democratic primary handily and breezed through the general election to become the 5th District's Representative. He would hold that seat for the next 28 years.

A man of profound decency, extraordinary intelligence, and an unmatched work ethic, John became one of Congress's most effective legislators. He never feared working across the aisle to get things done and perfected the art of finding common ground while standing firm on his principles. His unique ability to find that common ground allowed him to fend off challengers time and again even as the political environment in South Carolina shifted beneath him.

During his service on the House Armed Services Committee, John chaired multiple subcommittees and eventually became the second highest-ranking Democrat. His interest in nuclear issues led him to lead the first foreign delegation to the Soviet Union to tour nuclear weapons plants, and he played a central role in passing the 1992 moratorium on U.S. nuclear testing. John also played a key role in helping the Catawba Tribe gain long-sought federal recognition, bringing together Catawba leaders and local landowners to negotiate a deal that met both sides' approval.

John's proudest accomplishments in Congress came when he assumed the powerful role as the top Democrat on the House Budget Committee in 1997. When President Bill Clinton expressed support for a balanced budget, John and his friend Erskine Bowles, Clinton's Chief of Staff, were tasked with negotiating with Republicans on a bill that preserved critical investments in education, health care, and social programs while cutting government spending. The resulting Balanced Budget Act of 1997 created the first federal budget surplus in 30 years and the budget hasn't been balanced since.

When Democrats regained the House majority in 2006, John became chair of the House Budget Committee. When President Barack Obama made health care reform a