

every person in our region who reached out was treated fairly by the federal government. Over the years, she has been vital to a simple mission—make government work better for the people. But that was more than a tagline. It led to real impacts for real people.

She helped seniors get access to Social Security and Medicaid so they could retire with dignity. She helped shipyard workers and other public servants resolve issues with their benefits and pensions to ensure they could get what they've earned. She helped reunite families and ensure immigrants in our country could continue to contribute meaningfully to the fabric of our society. She helped newlyweds go on their honeymoon when they didn't realize they didn't have an up-to-date passport. She helped small businesses get access to federal funding to get back on their feet during and after the pandemic. She helped veterans get the benefits and recognition that they deserve for their extraordinary service.

Cheri is not only known in every corner of our district; she is loved in every corner of our district. And there's a very simple reason.

It's because Cheri Williams is a difference-maker.

I am so grateful to her for being a part of my team, a mentor to members of our team, and the definition of a public servant. As I complete my time in office, I want to commend Cheri and her family for all that they have committed to our community. And I want to thank Cheri for her service to folks in our region and to making life better for Washingtonians.

I thank Cheri, on behalf of the people of Washington's Sixth District.

CONGRATULATING ST. BERNARDS HEALTHCARE ON ITS 125TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. ERIC A. "RICK" CRAWFORD

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. CRAWFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of St. Bernards Healthcare, which celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2025. St. Bernards, based in Jonesboro, Arkansas, began caring for patients in 1900, in response to a malaria fever epidemic. A group of Olivetan Benedictine Sisters received a request to care for the sick, and they purchased a six-room house to be converted into a hospital. That house is now a hospital that stands as a 454-bed regional medical center, the largest of its kind in eastern Arkansas and southeast Missouri. Every year, 625,000 patients across 23 counties depend on St. Bernards's 100 locations and more than 4,700 team members to provide exceptional care.

St. Bernards strives to uphold the mission set by its founding Sisters, who still sponsor it today—"to provide Christ-like healing to the community through education, treatment, and health services."

Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating St. Bernards Healthcare's 125th anniversary.

CELEBRATING STEPHEN PECK

HON. TED LIEU

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. LIEU. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Stephen Peck, a Marine Corps Veteran and non-profit leader who has dedicated his career to serving his fellow veterans. After 28 years of service, 14 years in which he led the organization, Stephen is retiring as Chief Executive Officer of U.S. VETS, an organization dedicated to preventing and ending veteran homelessness nationwide. Stephen leaves a lasting legacy as a veteran leader who has devoted his efforts to empower veterans and families through housing, comprehensive services and advocacy.

Born in 1946 to Greta Kukkonen and actor Gregory Peck in Los Angeles, Stephen grew up in Southern California and went on to graduate from Northwestern University. After graduation, he was drafted into the United States Marine Corps, serving as a First Lieutenant in the 1st Marine Division and forward observer outside Danang during the Vietnam War.

After completing his service in Vietnam, Stephen returned home, attended the graduate film school at the University of Southern California and worked on a number of television shows and became a documentary filmmaker. After making *Heart of the Warrior*, a documentary about Vietnam War and Soviet-Afghanistan War veterans returning to the countries they fought in and *Far From Home*, a documentary about homeless veterans in Venice, California, Stephen returned to USC and earned a master's degree in social work.

While completing his degree, Stephen began working as a social worker at the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center, assisting his fellow veterans. Stephen found his true passion in this work and in 1996, he joined the United States Veterans Initiative, a non-profit that provides homeless veterans with temporary housing, counseling and wrap-around services. In 2010, Stephen was named CEO of U.S. VETS, expanding the organization's work in several states. During his leadership, the organization has grown tremendously, and offers services to veterans across Southern California, Hawaii, Arizona, Nevada, Texas and Washington, D.C.

After the West Los Angeles Leasing Act was signed into law, giving the Department of Veterans Affairs the authority to develop supportive housing and services for homeless veterans, U.S. VETS was selected by the VA as part of the principal developer team for the site. Dedicated to ending veteran homelessness in Southern California, this project co-led by U.S. VETS is building new supportive housing for veterans, social work and community space and at its full build out will house a minimum of 1,200 units of supportive housing and a community dedicated to veterans in Los Angeles County. In 2023, the Congressional Medal of Honor Society awarded U.S. VETS with its Community Service Award for demonstrating the values epitomized by the Medal of Honor.

Stephen's decades of service to our veterans returning from combat, are commendable and his work to help house and support them has reverberated in Southern California and beyond. I am confident that his work will

continue to benefit veterans throughout our Nation and will inspire others to continue the fight to finally end veteran homelessness in our country.

HONORING THE PHOEBUS HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM ON THEIR STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Phoebus High School Football Team from Hampton, Virginia on becoming the Virginia High School League's Class 4 State Champions.

The Phoebus Phantoms won the Class 4 state championship game against the Varina High School Blue Devils with a score of 23-6. This is the fourth year in a row Phoebus High School has claimed a state championship title following two consecutive victories in the Class 3 division. Led by Coach Jeremy Blunt, the championship makes the Phoebus Class of 2025 the second to win four state titles in a row, or "4 peat," and its 49 consecutive wins are only three short of the 2012 class, which also won four state crowns from 2008 to 2011. Phoebus High School closed the season undefeated, with a record of 14 wins and 0 losses.

The Phantoms scored first with a field goal, but the Blue Devils scored the first touchdown, taking a 6-3 lead. The Phantoms had not trailed their opponents for much of the 2024 season, but sophomore Quarterback Maurikus Banks ended the Blue Devils' lead when he threw a 54-yard touchdown pass to Romeir Smith for a 9-6 halftime lead. The Phantoms defense shut out Varina for the rest of the game. Offensive Lineman Markus Hopson recovered a fumble into the end zone and gave the Phantoms a 16-6 lead and then Banks added a rushing touchdown for the final score of 23-6.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to congratulate the Phoebus High School Football Team and thank Coach Blunt, the parents, and the entire Phoebus High School community for supporting these students throughout this remarkable season and now a second "4 peat" in school history with their state championship win. They have made all of us incredibly proud. I wish them the best in their future endeavors, and I wish the program continued success.

HONORING THE LIFE OF HERSH GOLDBERG-POLIN

HON. ABIGAIL DAVIS SPANBERGER

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Ms. SPANBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of love, light, and peace that Hersh Goldberg-Polin built throughout his 23 years of life.

Hersh was a loving son, devoted brother, and beloved friend to many. He was born on October 3, 2000 to Rachel Goldberg and Jon Polin, and he was the loving older brother to

sisters Leebie and Orly. Hersh grew up to be a curious and intelligent young man. His family lived in Richmond, Virginia—where they and Hersh were devoted community members, known for their kindness and love of learning—before eventually settling down in Jerusalem, Israel where Hersh spent his formative years.

Hersh was enthusiastic about his love for soccer and especially enjoyed cheering on the Hapoel Jerusalem Football Club. He used his passion for soccer to help his community as a member of the Malha Brigade, the team's official fan club. As a member of the club, he participated in community events and advocated for unity through an initiative to bring Israeli and Palestinian children together through a common love for soccer. His room displayed a sign that reads "Jerusalem is for everyone" in English, Hebrew, and Arabic.

At the age of 18, he fulfilled his duty and served as part of the Israel Defense Forces. While he fulfilled different duties during his time of service, he enjoyed being a medic most—helping and healing others. He concluded his service honorably in April 2023.

His love for people and for learning grew as he traveled the world. After a summer trip across Europe, Hersh returned to Israel and attended the Nova desert rave on October 7, 2023, where attendees were attacked by terrorists. Hersh lost his arm during this attack while trying to protect and help others—always a caring and loving friend to all. Hersh was captured, held hostage for nearly a year, and was tragically murdered by Hamas terrorists. Yet throughout the 320 days he was held hostage, it was the image of his joyful eyes and his broad smile that brought continued attention and a global focus to the plight of the hostages and the need for the world to prioritize their return.

As we—here in the halls of Congress and across our country—remember the tragedy of the day that stole Hersh from his family and friends and ultimately took him from this world, we also celebrate the joy and kindness he brought to everyone he touched throughout his 23 years. We honor the young man who became known to the world for his extraordinary compassion, joyful spirit, and ultimately his bravery. We mourn with his family—his beloved parents and sisters—and friends, and we also join them in honoring his extraordinary life. I know each of his loved ones will carry on his legacy by continuing his work—by promoting peace, charity, and love. May his memory be a blessing.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring the remarkable life and legacy built by Hersh Goldberg-Polin. To his family, friends, and loved ones—may the memories of love and light that were built with Hersh bring them peace and comfort as they honor his life in years to come.

RECOGNIZING THE PLANT CITY FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT

HON. LAUREL M. LEE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Ms. LEE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Plant City's Firefighters, a group of incredible individuals who have dedi-

cated their lives to serve our community, as they celebrate the swearing-in of new firefighters and the Plant City Firefighter of the Year.

Congratulations to Cameron Hall, John Furlow, and Christian Torres on earning their badge as the newest members of the Plant City Fire Department. Becoming a firefighter requires immense courage, dedication, and a willingness to put others before oneself. I look forward to seeing the great impact they will have on our community.

I would like to extend my congratulations to Captain Jason Mesa, who has been named Plant City's Firefighter of the Year. Captain Mesa's ability to lead by example, particularly during the most challenging times, is a testament to his remarkable character and service. I thank him for everything he does to keep Plant City safe.

I salute Battalion Chief James Wingo for his 30 years of unwavering service in the Department. Thirty years is an exceptional achievement—I thank him for his service.

Lastly, I extend my deepest appreciation to all the men and women of the Plant City Fire Department. They are the first responders we turn to when disaster strikes, and they show up, without hesitation. During Hurricane Milton, we saw the true extent of their dedication, as they worked tirelessly to protect our residents, secure our neighborhoods, and help our community. On behalf of the people of Florida's 15th District, I want to thank them.

I thank them for their service, their sacrifices, and their unwavering commitment to our community.

HONORING TRACY DISCHERT VERNER

HON. CORI BUSH

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Ms. BUSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, along with the people of St. Louis, in recognition of the outstanding work of Tracy Dischert Verner, a dedicated advocate for equity and financial inclusion in Missouri's First District. Through her tireless efforts, Tracy has sought to dismantle the systemic barriers that have long impeded many St. Louisans from accessing the banking services they need to achieve financial stability and security.

Tracy's work within the banking system has focused on increasing access to financial tools that are essential for building generational wealth. She has been a champion for those who have been historically excluded and marginalized, developing innovative programs that serve those with the greatest need in our community.

Through her leadership, Tracy has expanded access to vital financial services for thousands of St. Louisans, including providing access to direct deposit for thousands of young workers, which enables them to participate more fully in the economy. She has established college savings accounts for thousands of students in St. Louis Public Schools, helping to ensure that higher education remains an attainable goal for the next generation. She has partnered with workforce development agencies, recidivism programs, crisis intervention services, and emergency shelters

to provide comprehensive banking solutions to individuals in transition, including unhoused individuals and women in crisis. Throughout her work, she has ensured that individuals who have been justice-involved have the tools they need to rebuild their financial futures and re-enter the workforce with confidence.

Tracy Dischert Verner's service has had a profound and lasting impact on Missouri's First District. Her unwavering commitment to equity, economic empowerment, and justice has transformed countless lives. As we honor her achievements, let us also carry forward her vision of a community where no one is left behind, and where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Tracy's legacy is a reminder that meaningful change is possible when we dedicate ourselves to uplifting others, and we are forever grateful for her extraordinary contributions.

CELEBRATING THOMAS RAY DIX'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

HON. GUY RESCHENTHALER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. RESCHENTHALER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate Thomas Ray Dix, a World War II veteran, who will turn 100 years old on December 26, 2024.

In 1943, Mr. Dix enlisted in the Navy and attained the rank of a Motor Machinist's Mate Second Class. He was sent to the Pacific Theater where he served aboard the USS *Hemminger* (DE 746). Mr. Dix participated in several missions, trained submarines for war patrols, and engaged in antisubmarine operations. In the Pacific Theater, the USS *Hemminger* (DE 746) supported the search for Lieutenant General Millard F. Harmon and escorted supplies during the Battle of Okinawa.

Thereafter, Mr. Dix served on the USS *Minivet* (AM-371). In October 1945, he arrived in Japan to sweep sea lanes for mines leftover from the war. On December 29, 1945, the ship struck a mine and began sinking, but thankfully, Mr. Dix survived and returned home to his family.

Following his honorable military service, Mr. Dix returned to southwestern Pennsylvania to start his career and continue his public service. He stayed active in the Normalville Veterans of Foreign Wars club, where he often recalled heroic stories of his service in World War II. In 1963, Mr. Dix became the co-owner of Anchor Cement Block Works, where he ran the company with his brother, Edwin Dale Dix. He became a Deacon at the Indian Head Church of God and served on the Donegal School Board in Westmoreland County. Mr. Dix remains active in many community organizations, including the VFW, and lives in the home he built with his late wife, Valetta, 70 years ago. He is an important member of our community, and we thank him for his years of service to our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the House join me in celebrating a true American hero, Mr. Thomas Ray Dix, on his 100th birthday.