

COMMENDING SECRETARY OMER OSMAN FOR 35 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

HON. DARIN LaHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor and congratulate Omer Osman on his retirement from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) after 35 years of service to the people of Illinois.

Secretary Omer Osman was born in Kerma, Sudan, the son of Zumrawi and Fatima Osman. He was the fourth of eleven children, all receiving a college education. Osman received his bachelor's degree in engineering from Southern University followed by his master's degree in engineering from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois.

Beginning as a civil engineering trainee in Peoria, Osman quickly ascended to the position of District Bureau Chief of Operations, followed by Region 5 Engineer, Chief Engineer, Director of Highways, and Deputy Secretary. On June 1, 2019, he was confirmed as the Secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation, the thirteenth person to hold that title and the first person of color.

In his capacity as Secretary of Transportation, Osman had the responsibility for oversight of 80 airports, an expansive waterway infrastructure, 300,000 miles of roads and bridges, and a railroad system that transports 25 percent of the country's freight passing through Illinois.

Secretary Osman is credited by the Administration with increasing diversity at all levels of the Department of Transportation, as well as improving access to department partnerships for minority and female owned businesses.

Secretary Osman's accomplishments during his tenure leading the Illinois Department of Transportation include, but are not limited to, the new Mississippi River Bridge and Route 24 widening, relocation of Illinois Route 3 in East St. Louis, the Interstate 74 Mississippi River Bridge in the Quad Cities, the interstate 74/155 interchange reconstruction in Morton, the Interstate 74 Murray Baker Bridge, the Illinois Route 13 expansion between Carbondale and Interstate 57 in Marion, and the rehabilitation of the US 150 Illinois River Bridge in Peoria.

Secretary Omer Osman will forever be known as one of Peoria's greatest public servants. It is my privilege to congratulate him on his retirement and we wish him, his wife Dr. Magda Osman, sons Khalid and Waleed, and daughter Nadeen the best in the future.

HONORING RICK RICKER, A DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER

HON. CLAY HIGGINS

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Richard Everett Ricker, a dear friend and brother. Rick Ricker was a legend in Louisiana, and he was kind enough to give

me a job when I very much needed one in 1984. Rick Ricker became like a father to me through the years, and our friendship was unbreakable. Honestly Mr. Speaker, I don't believe I would be standing before you today as a Congressional servant to We the People, if Rick Ricker had not guided me through some of the darkest periods of my life. For the last forty years, Rick has always been there for me. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Rick introduced me to my wife Becca almost twenty years ago. I just cannot fully explain how much Rick has meant to me and my family.

Rick Ricker was a fighter, and he waged a valiant battle to the very last minute of his life, but Rick has gone home to the Lord.

Rick loved golf, and Harley Davidson motorcycles, and fast cars. He drank and laughed and loved life. Rick Ricker lived, Mr. Speaker. He lived an edge of life that most men will never understand, and I can say without doubt that he dearly loved his family. He was so, so proud of his sons and the men that they became, he gave me a thousand updates on them through the years. If pure love is a measure of a man's struggle to be a good father, Rick Ricker set a shining example, because he made it very clear how much he admired and loved his sons. When Rick's wife died, many years ago, he was injured in his heart in a way that changed him forever. Rick and I have just been through so much together. When my father died in August of 1989, I called only two men that night, and one of them was Rick. I cried with him, and he comforted me the way only a loving father can.

Richard E. Wicker is survived by his two sons, Brent and Brian; four grandchildren, Amber, Isaiah, Kaleb, and Elora Ricker; three brothers, Fred, Peter, and Jim; one sister, Peggy, and a multitude of nieces and nephews. The virtue and success of his family today will forever mirror the love that Rick had for them.

I will miss Rick terribly as my brother. I am prayerful that we will meet again in the kingdom. Lord Jesus, please hold Rick close and cover him with your grace.

MOURNING THE LOSS OF GENE "THE PUMPKIN MAN" RHODES

HON. BILL HUIZENGA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. HUIZENGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mourn the loss of a true Southwest Michigan icon, Gene "The Pumpkin Man" Rhodes. As the owner and operator of a local family farm in Kalamazoo County for more than 60 years, customers could count on Gene not just for their fall pumpkins, but also for countless memories with family and friends.

Inspired by his late wife Carol, Gene transformed his family farm into the pumpkin-themed destination it is today. He was well-known for his orange dress shirt, tucked into his orange slacks, held up by his orange suspenders, and perhaps most notably, his orange 2005 Cadillac with the license plate "Pumman." Visitors to the farm would also be greeted by pumpkin-themed furniture, decorations, and even a pumpkin-headed man and his wife. It was Gene's passion and light-

hearted spirit that helped make visits to the Pumpkin Patch special for so many.

As a Michigan Centennial Farm, the Rhodes farm has been in Gene's family since 1885. The farm has continuously sold pumpkins since 1957 and now produces hundreds of tons of pumpkins each year.

For many in Southwest Michigan, Halloween meant a visit to Gene the Pumpkin Man. Gene provided cherished memories and experiences to families spanning generations, leaving behind a rich legacy. He will be truly missed.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating the life of Southwest Michigan's most famous pumpkin farmer: Mr. Gene Rhodes, the Pumpkin Man.

HONORING THE 400TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF MATA GUJRI JI

HON. THOMAS R. SUOZZI

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. SUOZZI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 400th birth anniversary of Mata Gujri Ji, who in 1704, at age 81, was the first female Sikh civil rights activist to face imprisonment, torture, and execution, all for the sake of liberty. Sikhs around the world celebrate her life during the Safar-E-Shahadat—the last week of December—which is the holiest week for Sikhs. As a member of the Sikh Caucus, I join the worldwide Sikh community in recognizing this important quadricentennial anniversary.

Mata Gujri Ji was the mother of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, and the wife of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji. When Guru Gobind Singh Ji was nine years old, the monarchy of that time started clamping down on religious freedom and civil liberties. Guru Teg Bahadur Ji stood up to the monarchy's oppression and, as a result, faced imprisonment. Mata Gujri Ji stood by his side and encouraged him to continue fighting for freedom.

Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was given an ultimatum. He could either abandon his struggle against the monarchy or face execution. Mata Gujri Ji and Guru Gobind Singh Ji encouraged Guru Teg Bahadur Ji not to abandon his principles. Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was later executed.

Mata Gujri Ji continued to fight for civil liberty as she raised Guru Gobind Singh Ji. She was a pillar of strength for the Sikhs of her time and many from around the world sought her advice. Mata Gujri Ji taught Sikh women that they should be both kind and courageous.

In December 1704, the monarchy imprisoned her and her younger grandchildren, 9-year-old Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and 7-year-old Baba Fateh Singh Ji. They were kept in the Thanda Bud, or the cold tower, where government officials went to escape the hot Indian summers. That month, the Thanda Burj reached deadly freezing temperatures. Mata Gujri and her grandsons were not given food, water, or warm clothing and endured daily torture.

During their time in the cold tower, a devotee named Moti Mehra Ji bribed prison guards to sneak in warm milk for Mata Gujri Ji and her grandsons. Once the regime discovered this, Moti Mehra Ji's entire family was publicly executed.

During their imprisonment, Mata Gujri Ji reminded her grandsons about the bravery of their grandfather and their duty to remain courageous in the face of cruelty. Mata Gujri and her grandsons refused the government's attempts to bribe them, and as a result, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh Ji were sentenced to death by suffocation in a brick wall.

While Mata Gujri Ji was in prison with her younger grandsons, her older two grandsons, and 40 Sikhs, also gave their lives fighting tyranny at Chamkaur Sahib. They faced a brutal winter and constant hunger, yet refused to surrender their struggle for liberty. Each year, Sikhs gather at Gurudwara Fatehgarh Sahib in Sirhind, India, for the Safar-e-Shahadat Smagam, founded by Giani Harpal Singh Ji, to find inspiration by sitting in the thanda burj, where Mata Gujri and her grandsons once sat, and listening to accounts of their bravery.

Mata Gujri Ji gave her life defending the right for others to be treated with dignity. Her steadfast courage in the face of darkness remains an inspiration for all those who stand for freedom. Today, the Third Congressional District of New York joins the Sikh community in honoring Mata Gujri Ji and all of the brave sacrifices which took place during the Safar-E-Shahadat.

**HONORING THE SERVICE OF NEW
ULM CITY COUNCILOR LES
SCHULTZ**

HON. BRAD FINSTAD

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. FINSTAD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the service of Les Schultz, a friend, neighbor, and public servant who is retiring this week after sixteen years of service on the New Ulm City Council.

Since his election in 2008, Les has faithfully represented the people of New Ulm's Ward 3. Throughout his four terms, he has served as a strong voice for the City of New Ulm on numerous boards and committees, most notably the city's Economic Development Authority.

Les is currently the longest-serving member of the New Ulm City Council, and has dedicated countless hours to improving the city we call home. He was instrumental in projects like soliciting community input for new welcome signs for the city, and the completion of the New Ulm dog park—both of which will continue to benefit our community for many years to come.

This week, Les attended his final city council meeting, closing the book on his longtime service to the City of New Ulm. I congratulate Les, on his well-deserved retirement, and I wish him and his family the best in this next chapter.

**RECOGNIZING LLOYD RICE'S SERV-
ICE TO THE NATION AND HIS
FAMILY**

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Lloyd Rice, a resident of Michigan,

on the occasion of his 100th birthday. His dedication to his family, community, and Nation is worthy of commendation.

Lloyd was born in Green County, Indiana, and moved to Jackson, Michigan, at the age of 16. The following year, he was leaving a movie theatre when he heard the news that America had been attacked at Pearl Harbor. He graduated from Jackson High School in 1943 and received his draft notice in the mail the day of his graduation.

Lloyd joined the Navy and became a diesel mechanic for a destroyer escort that patrolled the Atlantic for German submarines. Many of their missions included escorting ships carrying troops and supplies across the ocean, deterring the enemy submarines that prowled the area. These efforts were part of a continuous 18-month patrol in the Atlantic. After the deployment, Lloyd returned on leave to the United States, and then deployed on a ship headed for the Pacific when they received word that the Japanese had surrendered.

After the war, Lloyd became a carpenter and played a major role in the post-war manufacturing boom of his community, taking part in the building of 15 schools and being the foreman on 3 of them. He married his first love, Dorothy, in 1947, and had two children. Sadly she succumbed to her battle with cancer in 1962. A couple years later, Lloyd met his last love, Evelyn, and they married in 1965, and had 2 children. They were married 67 years until Evelyn passed in 2022. After recovering from heart surgery in his early 70s, Lloyd started working again at his local Home Depot for 19 years, before retiring again at the well-seasoned age of 96.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in honoring the lifetime of service that Lloyd Rice has been so kind to share with us. After serving his country as a young man, he spent the rest of his life building schools, churches, and houses in order to make his communities more welcoming and prosperous for all. We thank him for his service and wish him the happiest birthdays. I thank Lloyd.

**RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL CER-
TIFIED DIETARY MANAGERS
(CDM), CERTIFIED FOOD PROTEC-
TION PROFESSIONALS (CFPP)
DAY**

HON. JENNIFER A. KIGGANS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mrs. KIGGANS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the National Certified Dietary Managers (CDM), Certified Food Protection Professionals (CFPP) Day, which this year fell on November 28, 2024. This day is meant to honor the contributions these professionals have made in the food service management profession and the lives they have impacted through their service in America's healthcare industry.

I would also like to recognize the Association of Nutrition & Foodservice Professionals (ANFP) for their efforts to designate November 28, National CDM, CFPP Day. Over 90 percent of the ANFP's more than 13,000 members work in healthcare and a majority of those are in long-term care facilities. As a geriatric nurse practitioner, I have seen first-

hand the way in which CDMs and CFPPs positively affect health outcomes for members of our greatest generation.

They play an essential role in America's healthcare industry, and as such are responsible for managing nutrition and food service operations. They are trained and qualified to administer menus, food purchasing and preparation, and to apply nutrition principles, among many other essential tasks. The CDM, CFPP credential is also the basis for the ANFP Youth Apprenticeship Program, which was approved by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2022.

This year it was especially fitting that the National CDM, CFPP Day fell on Thanksgiving, as CDMs and CFPPs work 365 days a year to serve their patients. It is an honor to celebrate these dedicated professionals who work tirelessly, even over the holidays, away from their friends and families and loved ones.

I am proud to honor their significant impacts to healthcare and celebrate the National Certified Dietary Managers, Certified Food Protection Professionals Day of the Year.

**COMMEMORATING THE
MATTHEWS-VU MEDICAL GROUP**

HON. DOUG LAMBORN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate and celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Matthews-Vu Medical Group in Colorado Springs, led by Doctor Richard Vu and his wife Doctor Shabnum Matthews-Vu. The Matthews-Vu Medical Group has served the Pikes Peak region with a focus on the underserved in our community, offering many low-cost medical solutions for those most vulnerable.

Dr. Vu was born in Vietnam and moved to the United States as a young boy with his mother and siblings, living in Chicago near his father. The circumstances of his upbringing instilled in him a hard work ethic and desire to serve those around him who are underserved, especially those on welfare and receiving governmental aid.

Dr. Vu and Dr. Matthews-Vu, who grew up in East Meadows, New York, met at Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago, where they both received their medical degrees. Dr. Vu completed his residency in Internal Medicine at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago, while Dr. Matthews-Vu completed her residency in Pediatrics at the University of Chicago. After residency, the couple first lived in Arizona and then moved to Colorado Springs in 2004 with their family, they began their medical practice shortly after the move.

Originally founded with only two and a half physicians and a small and modest office in 2004, the Matthews-Vu Medical Group has grown to over sixty providers in five locations with a broad range of specialties and medical skills. Specializing in serving our community and patients who are on government plans such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Tricare, the Matthews-Vu Medical Group has become a beacon of help for those in our community who need affordable medical care that is provided with an intentionally caring and loving heart.