

Mark's leadership in support of the general aviation community has been invaluable to hundreds of thousands of pilots and aircraft owners and the endeavors they support through flight. His unwavering commitment to promoting and protecting the freedom to fly—a freedom truly unique to the United States—has helped facilitate the wide range of general aviation flight missions, including business, disaster relief, philanthropy, and personal transportation.

Mark has been the most impactful leader in AOPA's 85-year history, serving as a tireless and effective advocate for general aviation. He has consistently provided legislators and regulators with valuable insights on important issues such as medical certification reform, strengthening our national network of airports, aviation and education career opportunities for youth, advancing flight deck technology, ensuring fair and transparent pricing for pilots, and improving aviation safety. Among the important legislation he has helped shape is the very first general aviation title in an FAA reauthorization bill, setting an important precedent for the future.

Mark's passion for aviation began as a child growing up in Minnesota, when he and his younger brothers, Scott and Jim, rode their bicycles to the local airport to watch airplanes and take penny-a-pound airplane rides. He took a ground school class in high school and earned his private pilot certificate soon after. Flight instructor Waldo Anderson, who is now 90 years old and still flying, mentored and inspired Mark as he worked to earn additional pilot certificates and ratings.

As a teenager just starting college, Mark found additional mentors in his employers, Knox Lumber founders Don DeCoster, Larry Platt, and Mel Maurer. The World War II veterans quickly recognized Mark's strong work ethic, which he learned from parents Ralph and Bev. Taking him under their wing, the trio soon taught Mark the ins and outs of retail lumber, laying the groundwork for his future business success in the home improvement industry.

After leaving Knox, Mark held leadership roles with Payless Cashways, Scotty's, and Home Base before joining Home Depot in that company's formative years. While at Home Depot, Mark held numerous executive positions, including Chief Operating Officer, and continued to build deep and lasting relationships throughout the home improvement vendor and real estate communities, helping to drive large-scale growth for his company and the industry. He even used his flying skills, and both personal and business aircraft, to help identify locations for hundreds of new stores nationwide.

Mark has held numerous other influential positions, including Chief Operating Officer at Scotts Miracle-Gro Company, President and Chief Executive Officer at outdoor outfitter Gander Mountain, and Chief Executive Officer at Orchard Supply Hardware.

Recognizing the important role of mentors in his own life, Mark has generously mentored hundreds of pilots, providing access to aircraft, instructors, and opportunities to fly, as well as sharing the wisdom he has gained in more than 10,000 hours at the controls. In that same spirit, he launched the You Can Fly program at AOPA, which has so far provided free aviation STEM curriculum to more than 100,000 high school students nationwide.

Mark's commitment to creating opportunities for young people is matched only by his commitment to his family, including his wife JoAnn; his four children, Lindsay, Kristine, Shannon, and Andrew; his sons-in-law Pete and Alex; and his eight grandchildren.

As Mark prepares to retire from AOPA, I wish him well in all his endeavors and thank him for his service to the aviation community and the Nation. I am confident he will continue to mentor the next generation of aviators as a passionate and influential advocate for GA.

#### HONORING PINYI WANG

#### HON. FREDERICA S. WILSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 20, 2024*

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the outstanding service of Pinyi Wang, my fellow who served with distinction in my office and dedicated her time to serving the people of Florida's 24th Congressional District.

Pinyi is currently working on her Ph.D. in the Educational Leadership and Policy program at the University of Florida. I am proud to say that Pinyi has shown great dedication and passion for education and has devoted her time in my office to advance education policy forward.

It was obvious that Pinyi was ready to meet the challenge of contributing to the field of education. Her commitment to closing the opportunity gap across race, ethnicity, and gender became apparent with her work in addressing the inequalities found in the use of Artificial Intelligence in educational spaces. Furthermore, she has contributed significantly to moving my One School, One Nurse Act along the legislative process.

Pinyi's intellect, kindness, and hard work will always be remembered. I wish Pinyi all the best as she continues her doctoral studies in education equity and equality both domestically and internationally. I am certain that the next step in her journey will be filled with much success.

On behalf of Florida's 24th Congressional District, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Pinyi Wang for her commitment and service.

#### HONORING ASHEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL BOYS AND GIRLS INDIVIDUAL CROSS COUNTRY

#### HON. CHUCK EDWARDS

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 20, 2024*

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Michael Haskin and Sofi Alexander, the boys and girls individual cross country winners of North Carolina's 4A state championship race, both belonging to Asheville High School.

Asheville High senior Michael Haskin ran his second fastest time of the season in a neck and neck race to win the boys individual 4A championship.

In the girls individual 4A race, junior Sofi Alexander took home first place for the Ashe-

ville High Cougars. Sofi is the first Cougar to win a girls cross country state championship.

Both runners, Michael and Sofi, won their races by less than two seconds, a testament to the determination of both athletes and the highly competitive fields.

On behalf of all of Western North Carolina, congratulations to Michael and Sofi.

#### HIGHLIGHTING THE CAREER OF SYLVIA GÓMEZ

#### HON. JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 20, 2024*

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievements and contributions of Puerto Rican broadcast journalist and news anchor Sylvia Gómez, after a career spanning over fifty years.

Sylvia Gómez was a pioneer in broadcast journalism in Puerto Rico, starting in this field at a time when the opportunities for women had barely begun to become available. She was able to find valuable mentors among seasoned figures and prove herself in the field and on the air, soon establishing herself in reporting, interviewing, and anchoring as part of the news teams in the San Juan media market.

She has since been a constant presence in Puerto Rico TV screens, starting in public television and making her way through our major news outlets becoming an anchorwoman and a lead investigative reporter, eventually leading to a 44-year career at Telemundo WKAQ-TV.

Her reporting on environmental issues helped set the standard for such coverage and earned her numerous recognitions inside and outside the industry, with over 15 awards from press organizations, including a Silver Circle Emmy awarded by the Suncoast Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in 2022.

I also want to highlight her principled fight against age discrimination by media employers, an issue that disproportionately impacts women in this field. Her stand on this subject bore witness to her integrity, strength and courage, and will certainly lead to a better workplace for many in the future. She has been an example to be followed, showing how one can and should continue fighting for your rights and the rights of others.

Sylvia is now moving on to enjoy a different stage of her life. I know she will continue to be a valuable member of Puerto Rico's community, and today I applaud her outstanding work, thank her for her commitment to what she saw as right and true to keep us informed, and wish her all the best moving forward.

#### HONORING DELANEY JANE CALLAHAN

#### HON. FREDERICA S. WILSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 20, 2024*

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the outstanding service of Delaney Jane Callahan, my intern who has served with

distinction in my office and dedicated their time to serving the people of Florida's 24th Congressional District.

A Florida native, Delaney, arrived at my office determined to make a difference in the American legislative landscape. During her time here, she has advanced my agendas significantly, whether by drafting speeches and press releases, organizing press events, or conducting policy research. Her passion for public service and government is unparalleled, and she exemplifies the qualities of a dedicated public servant.

Delaney is currently a student at the University of Colorado Boulder where she focuses on Journalism and Political Science. She also serves on CU Bold's Student Government Association as Strategic Communications and Public Relations Chair. In addition, Delaney is the Vice President of her Panhellenic sorority. Delaney has also followed her academic interests by studying abroad in Paris, France, where she served as a strategic communications intern for the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service Bureau.

Throughout Delaney's time in my office, I've observed that Delaney is deeply committed to journalism expertise to enhance the reach and influence of my office to as many constituents as possible. I am confident that she will continue to use her voice and talents to uplift underserved communities and champion important causes.

On behalf of Florida's 24th Congressional District, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Delaney Jane Callahan for her commitment and service.

#### HONORING SWAIN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY

#### HON. CHUCK EDWARDS

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 20, 2024*

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Swain County High School girls cross country team on their fourth consecutive North Carolina 1A girls cross country state championship title.

The Maroon Devils girls went above and beyond this season by posting their best score yet out of their four straight championships.

Additionally, Swain County senior, Arizona Blankenship, won her second individual 1A cross country title.

Once again, congratulations to the Swain County High School girls cross country team. Their streak of success is a testament to the dedication and passion of their runners and the exceptional culture of their program.

#### HONORING THE MICHIGAN BLACK CAUCUS OF LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

#### HON. ELISSA SLOTKIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 20, 2024*

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. Speaker, today I honor the Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials, a cornerstone of leadership, collaboration, and advocacy in Michigan since its

founding in 2004. For two decades, the Caucus has provided a forum for local elected officials to network, mentor, and support one another, fostering stronger and connected communities throughout Michigan.

First organized in March 2004 during the Michigan Municipal League Conference in Lansing, the Caucus began with 45 Black local elected officials before officially becoming an affiliate of the Michigan Municipal League later that year. The organization has grown in scope and impact under the leadership of its Presidents—Clara Shephard of Muskegon, Lois Allen-Richardson of Ypsilanti, and its current President, Brenda F. Moore of Saginaw. Together, these leaders have guided the Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials in its mission to amplify the voices of African American municipal officials and promote equitable governance across the state.

Through leadership development, data-informed policy, and its committees, the Caucus ensures that the needs of Michigan's diverse communities are heard and addressed. Its collaboration with state partners as well as national organizations has advanced policies that improve outcomes and representation for the African-American community. Additionally, its scholarships for high school students help ensure that the next generation of leaders has the tools they need to succeed in higher education.

The Caucus also serves as an important resource for its members, offering workshops, regional conferences, and a network of officials who share ideas and solutions to challenges faced by local governments. Through these efforts, it strengthens Michigan's cities, towns, and villages, empowering local governments to deliver meaningful progress and opportunity to their residents.

The Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials exemplifies the power of collaboration and shared purpose. By fostering equity, supporting emerging leaders, and advocating for policies that uplift the communities they serve, the Caucus has left an indelible mark on Michigan and beyond.

It is with great respect and gratitude that I ask that we recognize the Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials for its contributions and its role in shaping a more inclusive and prosperous future. May it continue to lead and inspire for many more years to come.

#### CELEBRATING SHERIFF STEVE KEMPKER'S RETIREMENT

#### HON. BILL HUIZENGA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 20, 2024*

Mr. HUIZENGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and congratulate Sheriff Steve Kempker on his retirement following 44 years of outstanding service to Ottawa County. Sheriff Kempker has been a sworn officer of the law for over four decades, protecting the citizens of West Michigan, and I thank him for his courageous service in the line of duty.

Sheriff Kempker began his law enforcement career in 1980 with the City of Holland Police Department before joining the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office in 1989. Throughout his career, Sheriff Kempker served the county in a variety

of roles, including Road Patrol Sergeant, Operations & Services Lieutenant, Captain, and Undersheriff. In 2016, Steve Kempker was elected as the 33rd Sheriff of Ottawa County.

In addition to his storied career as an officer, Sheriff Kempker has been a part of several law enforcement organizations and was appointed by Governor Rick Snyder and reappointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer to the State of Michigan Mental Health Diversion Council. He also served on the Michigan High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Board under the President's Office of Drug Control and Policy.

Sheriff Kempker has been an outstanding public servant for the people of Ottawa County for over 40 years. I am honored to call Steve a friend and wish him the best in his well-earned retirement. His impact on our community will never be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in commending Sheriff Steve Kempker for his decades of exceptional service to Ottawa County. I wish him the best as he enjoys his well-deserved retirement.

#### HONORING DANIEL CASTRO BONILLA

#### HON. FREDERICA S. WILSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 20, 2024*

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the outstanding service of Daniel Castro Bonilla, my fellow who served with distinction in my office and dedicated his time to serving the people of Florida's 24th Congressional District.

Daniel, a proud Honduran American from Miami, FL, graduated from Bowdoin College with a degree in Asian Studies. His commitment to bridging cultural and linguistic divides is exemplified by his experiences studying in China under the Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship and conducting research with the Middlebury program. Furthermore, Daniel served four impactful years with the Fulbright Program in Taiwan, where he collaborated with schools nationwide to enhance educational opportunities.

Daniel served as a research analyst for Miami-Dade County policymakers, whose work is instrumental in developing data-driven policy solutions. Daniel has demonstrated a profound commitment to public service in my office, showcasing his analytical skills and international perspective to benefit our constituents. His work has been particularly impactful in fostering meaningful conversations around current events in Haiti, using his international relations expertise to help me navigate these unprecedented times. His insights have been invaluable in supporting friends and families in foreign countries during these challenging circumstances.

Daniel is a current Rangel fellow and will work for the State Department. I wish Daniel all the best as he transitions into his graduate studies in foreign service. I do not doubt that the next step in his journey will be filled with continued success.

On behalf of Florida's 24th Congressional District, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Daniel Castro Bonilla for his commitment and service.