

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY  
OF ROBIE HARRIS

## HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 23, 2024*

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is with the fondest of memories and the heaviest of hearts that I rise today to remember author, educator, and my dear friend, Robie Harris, who we lost earlier this year. Robie was an extraordinary woman—a fierce defender of free speech, a dedicated teacher, an inspiring author, as well as a loyal friend and devoted wife and mother. Hers is a remarkable legacy as an advocate for children that will continue to inspire many.

Born in Buffalo, New York, Robie discovered her love for the written word very early in life. As she told it, at just six years old she “published” her first work, Robie’s Stories, an assignment from her kindergarten teacher. It was comprised of pictures and journal memories that each child produced every day that were then compiled into a book at the end of the year. As Robie grew up, so did her love of reading, writing, and learning—so much so that she would go on to dedicate her professional life to them.

Robie went on to become the editor of both her high school newspaper as well as her college yearbook. After earning her undergraduate degree at Wheaton College, Robie moved to New York City where she initially found work at the United Nations. However, she knew that this was not her passion, so she pursued a teaching degree at Bank Street College of Education. Following the completion of her degree from Bank Street, she became an elementary school teacher at the Bank Street School for Children, where she taught writing and later directed after-school programs in the school’s new Head Start program.

It was through her work with children, as well as the experience of watching her own children and nieces and nephews grow up, that Robie found a voice as a children’s book author. She was inspired by the many questions and curiosities she heard from them and made it her mission to write and produce books that would help them navigate the many changes they would experience as they moved from one stage of development to the next. Robie’s first book, a collaborative effort with fellow author and friend, Elizabeth Levy was *Before You Were Three: How You Began to Walk, Talk, Explore, and Have Feelings*, and her first solo books included the picture books *Don’t Forget to Come Back* and *I Hate Kisses*.

Over the course of her writing career, Robie maintained her commitment to writing nonfiction, age-appropriate books, writing more than thirty titles that covered a multitude of topics including engineering, architecture, nutrition, math, death, and genetics. But it was her groundbreaking work, *It’s Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, and Sexual Health*, a guided preadolescent children on puberty, their changing bodies, sexuality, and sexual health, that was not only her most successful, but also drove Robie’s fierce advocacy for free speech. While praised by medical professionals, child development specialists, and educators for its accuracy, reliability

and for offering children clear guidance on the topic, as well as having been translated into 27 languages and sold one million copies, and having been updated numerous times, including a 25th anniversary edition; this title has ranked among the most frequently challenged and banned books in the country according to the American Library Association.

Robie was an active member of PEN America, an organization that works to protect free expression in the United States and worldwide and champion the freedom to write because they understand the transformational power of words. Robie was a founding member of PEN America’s Children’s and Young Adults Books Committee and she was known for her calm, tactful, yet staunch and unwavering advocacy for the freedom of expression. In an essay for PEN, Robie once wrote, “I write books for children because in some small way I hope that they will find the words I write useful, reassuring, interesting, and at times humorous and also in some small way help them to stay emotionally and/or physically healthy by giving honest, accurate, up-to-date, and age-appropriate information.” Robie was fearless in her defense of her work and that of other writers. She once said in an interview, “This to me is the bottom line on freedom of expression. As a reader, you have the right to speak out for or against whatever you read. As a writer, I have the right to write whatever I want to write—and I am just not going to stop.”

Robie’s passion for working with children, particularly in early childhood development, was a shared mission. Her husband, Bill Harris, is the founder of KidsPac, a group that helped to focus legislators at every level of government on the importance of early childhood education. For more than two decades KidsPac was a leader and respected voice in the advocacy for policies concerning childcare, prenatal health, and early education. Robie and Bill’s activism was integrated into every facet of their lives, so it is no surprise that both of their sons, David and Ben, both followed in their footsteps. David, taking a page from his father’s work, has focused his professional life on research and advocacy for policies that address child poverty. Ben, whose interests more mirrored Robie’s, is now Clinical Professor at the Psychological Center at The City College of New York (CCNY), which provides low-to-moderate-cost services to the CCNY and West Harlem communities. In this role, and throughout his career, he has worked with a socioeconomically and culturally diverse range of children and adolescents as well as adults.

I found a kindred spirit in Robie. She never stopped, and she never took no for an answer. I will forever be grateful for the friendship, humor, and generosity she bestowed on me over the years. Illustrator and dear friend, Michael Emberly probably described her best when he said of Robie, “She was smart and sensitive, kind, and generous beyond reckoning. She was a complicated human being in the best sense, and she had one of the best attributes you can say about a human being—she was memorable.” I extend my heartfelt condolences to her husband, Bill, and her sons, David and Ben. Though we all feel that she was taken from us too soon, Robie Harris touched countless lives and she will be deeply missed by all those who knew her.

HONORING THE LIFE OF TONY  
VIGNAROLI

## HON. ZACHARY NUNN

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 23, 2024*

Mr. NUNN of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the tremendous life of Gunner Anthony Vignaroli who passed away on February 6, 2024. Tony made service to his country and the state of Iowa his life’s calling.

Following his graduation from Saydel High School, Tony embarked on a life of dedicated service. He served our country valiantly in the Vietnam War and then worked at Valley View Village as a Maintenance Supervisor.

Many knew him for his work as a volunteer for the Department of Public Safety at the Iowa State Fair, where he helped with security efforts. I was honored to work directly with Tony to enhance Iowa State Fair safety for more than a million visitors by acquiring a security tower for the midway.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Tony Vignaroli and the terrific impact he had on his community. I join his family and those closest to him in mourning his loss. May his memory never be forgotten.

HONORING BRIANA DANIEL AS A  
DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL  
FLORIDA FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 23, 2024*

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, during a run in Orlando in 2013, Briana Daniel encountered the stark reality of homelessness. Motivated to help but inexperienced in addressing this issue, she chose to immerse herself by living among the Downtown Orlando homeless community for over a month.

Through firsthand experience and conversations with them, she discovered their profound need for dignity through cleanliness. This insight led her to establish Street Team Movement Inc., an organization dedicated to offering hygiene services to the homeless community.

“It’s hard to have dignity or feel like you have value when you have nowhere to wash and no way to clean your clothes or yourself,” said Daniel.

Street Team Movement Inc. provides laundry services to the unhoused and hygiene items distributed through their hygiene vending machines. The machines are accessible for free to the homeless through their proprietary “Hope Cards,” which are special access cards allowing the population a limited number of transactions per week.

“We believe in compassionate assistance, not just handouts. The ‘Hope Card’ allows us to help without enabling dependency. We provide individuals the means to access items, and services while preventing any misuse,” said Daniel.

In 2021, Street Team Movement launched a special program specifically for homeless women called Project Lioness. The program aims to bridge the hygiene gap for unhoused

women by connecting them to critical feminine hygiene kits that will carry them through their monthly cycle. To date, Project Lioness has distributed over 1,000 hygiene kits stocked with panty liners, feminine napkins, tampons, and wipes. To date, Street Team Movement has washed over 30,000 loads of laundry, provided over 500 haircuts, and has given out over one million hygiene items. Since launching the hygiene vending machines in 2020, Street Team Movement has given out over 5,000 hygiene kits in five States.

On February 22, 2024, Briana Daniel was honored as a distinguished leader in Central Florida for Black History Month.

#### HONORING CLAY FIRE TERRITORY CHIEF TIMM SCHABEL'S CAREER IN SERVANT LEADERSHIP

### HON. RUDY YAKYM III

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 23, 2024*

Mr. YAKYM. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to recognize and congratulate Chief Timm Schabbel, who recently retired as Fire Chief of the Clay Fire Territory in South Bend, Indiana, after 35 impressive years with the department.

During his nearly four decades in public safety, Timm has served in different roles within the fire department, including as a firefighter, Engineer, Lieutenant, Chief of Operations, and Fire Chief. Timm was promoted to Fire Chief in 1997, making him the longest tenured chief officer in the agency's 75-year history.

Under Chief Schabbel's leadership, Clay Fire became the first internationally accredited fire department in Indiana. In addition, Clay Fire also expanded under Chief Schabbel's tenure, essentially tripling the area the department covers. These achievements were only possible thanks to Timm's vision and determination.

The many awards and accolades he has received over the years—including Firefighter of the Year from Clay Township, Fire Chief of the Year from the state of Indiana, the President's Award from the International Association of Fire Chiefs, and the Sagamore of the Wabash award—are all a testament to Timm's commitment to excellence and an accomplished career spent in the service to others.

The broader South Bend community and St. Joseph County are unquestionably better off and safer thanks to this good man who exemplifies what it means to be a leader and a true public servant.

Timm's example and leadership are also reminders that first responders are on the frontlines of some of the most difficult situations our communities face. When there is a problem, first responders like Timm answer the call and willingly put themselves in harm's way to keep us safe, and for that all of us are extremely grateful.

I am proud to join so many Hoosiers throughout Indiana's Second District in expressing our appreciation to Chief Schabbel for his service and in wishing him and his family all the best going forward during Timm's very well-deserved retirement. I thank Timm.

#### CELEBRATING THE 16TH ANNIVERSARY OF KOSOVO'S INDEPENDENCE

### HON. LISA C. McCLAIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 23, 2024*

Mrs. McCLAIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Kosovo's Independence Day on February 17th. This date marks 16 years since Kosovo declared independence in 2008 after enduring years of conflict. Kosovo has since emerged as an independent democratic nation and today is one of the most valuable allies of the American people.

In celebrating this occasion, I also celebrate the many Albanian-Americans who have made Michigan their home. Our community continues to grow and foster immense cultural, economic, and creative growth throughout the State of Michigan. These families embody the values of freedom and democracy that represent the American Dream.

Historically, Michigan itself has played a substantial—and proud—role in Kosovo's road to stability and democracy through the deployment of Michigan National Guard units to the region as peacekeeping forces.

I am delighted to honor the independence of Kosovo alongside the vibrant and ever-growing Albanian-American community that calls Michigan its home. Kosovo's remarkable transition into sovereignty, alongside our state's everlasting bonds with the Albanian-American people, represents the power of democracy both at home and abroad. The shared principles between our two nations truly represent the ideals that have turned our connection into economic prowess, shared defense, and international cooperation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in commemorating this wonderful occasion. Kosovo's Independence Day allows us to reflect not only on the meaning of freedom, but also the Albanian-American contributions throughout Michigan's Ninth District and the entire state.

#### RECOGNIZING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN HERO CADEN LEONARD

### HON. BETH VAN DUYNE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 23, 2024*

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Caden Leonard. As a sophomore at Southlake Carroll High School, Caden has made waves in the cross-country world. After winning the Class 6A individual state title and leading the Dragons to the 6A team championship, he went on to lift his team to a bronze medal at the Nike Cross Nationals (NXN) final. In qualifying for the NXN, he clocked a personal best, walking away with bronze and First Team All-Region recognition at Nike Cross Regionals South.

Not only is Caden an exceptional athlete, he's also a servant in the community, volunteering with the Young Men's Service League, the local branch of the Special Olympics, and serving in youth ministry at White's Chapel Methodist Church. Caden's dedication to aca-

demics, athletics, and public service led Gatorade to name him as Texas' 2024 Boys Cross Country Player of the Year.

Congratulations to Caden on his incredible accomplishments and well-deserved recognition. I look forward to following his cross-country career and cheering him on.

#### CONDEMNING RAPE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE COMMITTED BY HAMAS IN ITS WAR AGAINST ISRAEL

SPEECH OF

### HON. RASHIDA TLAIB

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 14, 2024*

Ms. TLAIB. Mr. Speaker, on February 14, during Roll Call No. 44, I recorded my vote as Present. The reason for my vote is as follows:

All acts of sexual violence are horrific. We should all be fighting to end it here at home and all over the world.

So, while this resolution rightly denounces any sexual committed by Hamas, I am disturbed that it completely ignores and erases any sexual abuse and violence committed by Israeli forces against Palestinians, especially children.

War crimes cannot justify more war crimes. We must stand up for everyone's safety and human rights, no matter their faith or ethnicity.

There are numerous, well-documented reports of sexual violence, including rape, committed by Israeli forces against Palestinians in their custody. Children detained and stripped to their underwear in public, for the world to see.

The UN and human rights groups have raised alarms for years—but Congress has never cared.

We all have a responsibility to denounce sexual violence in all forms, regardless of who is responsible. This resolution falls well short of that responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, outreach was made to the sponsor of H. Res. 966 on several occasions to support the inclusion of Palestinians who had been victims of sexual violence into the Resolution. However, the sponsor denied adding in any language that supports the well-documented fact that Palestinians have faced many atrocities similar to those described in the Resolution. Sexual violence is abhorrent and must be fully investigated and prosecuted. The intentional omission of Palestinian lived experiences in this resolution is dehumanizing and a disservice to survivors everywhere.

#### HONORING YOKEENBA JENKINS AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

### HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 23, 2024*

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, Yokeenba Jenkins was born and raised in Osceola County, where he attended elementary, middle, and high school, graduating from Osceola High School.