

Cultural Competence and has been a noteworthy speaker in this regard. For her extraordinary leadership and passion for giving back to the community, Dr. Allen-McCloud is worthy of the highest praise.

Over the years, Dr. Allen-McCloud has received many accolades honoring her impressive career. In addition, Dr. Allen-McCloud has generously served her community by giving her time and efforts to numerous charitable endeavors, and she serves on several local and national boards. For her exceptional devotion to these earnest causes, Dr. Allen-McCloud is to be commended.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my other distinguished colleagues to join me in celebrating Women's History Month and recognizing the dedication and contributions of Dr. Allen-McCloud and so many other extraordinary women who work to make our communities more equal, diverse, and inclusive.

HONORING CARLA JEAN
MARTINEZ

HON. BLAKE D. MOORE

OF UTAH

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to honor the exceptional accomplishments of Carla Jean Martinez who currently serves as the National President for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) Auxiliary. She is the first veteran to hold this position. She is a dual member of both the VFW Auxiliary and the VFW and is also an All-American District Commander with VFW Post 409 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Ms. Martinez's life serves as an exemplary model of selfless, patriotic service. Born in South Carolina, she joined the United States Navy in 1981, embarking on an honorable career as a cryptologist until her retirement in 1997. Her military service spanned the globe, including assignments in Japan, England, Korea, Virginia, and at the Pentagon. Whether stationed overseas or at home, Ms. Martinez consistently distinguished herself through unwavering commitment to her country. She was awarded the Defense Meritorious Service Medal in recognition of her exceptional military service.

Following her military retirement, Ms. Martinez moved to Utah and married Stanley Martinez in 2001. Her son, following in her footsteps, served in the United States Air Force. Shortly after retiring, Ms. Martinez joined the VFW Auxiliary and dedicated countless hours to serving fellow veterans through the VFW and at VA hospitals.

I express my deep gratitude to Ms. Martinez for her decades of dedicated service and sacrifice. She epitomizes courage, selflessness, and unwavering commitment to her fellow veterans and the Nation.

It is my honor to recognize her accomplishment as the first veteran to serve as the National President for the VFW Auxiliary.

RECOGNIZING TAMPA BAY'S
TRAILBLAZER GERARD (JERRY)
A. BELL, IN HONOR OF BLACK
HISTORY MONTH

HON. KATHY CASTOR

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today during Black History Month with immense gratitude for the selfless community service of philanthropist and retired Tampa Bay Buccaneers player, Gerard (Jerry) A. Bell. Through Mr. Bell's dedication to advancing the success of his neighbors, young and old, our neighborhoods have positively transformed. Mr. Bell devoted his considerable time and talents to improving African American student retention and completion of higher education, and in doing has lifted us all.

Mr. Bell was born in Derby, Connecticut, in 1959. He earned his bachelor's degree in computer information systems from Arizona State University where he was a standout Tight End on the Sun Devil's football team and a master's in business administration from the University of Tampa. For the past 20 years, Mr. Bell has served as an adjunct faculty member at Hillsborough Community College, Pasco Hernando State College, and the University of Phoenix. He teaches various college courses in introduction to business, marketing, and personal finance.

Mr. Bell is married to Ruth Bell, his partner in life and in philanthropic and community service. They are notably most proud of their two children, Vanessa and David.

After five seasons as a Tight End for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Mr. Bell pursued his passion outside of the game and entered technology sales during the 1990's, a time when this industry was evolving before the world's eyes. Mr. Bell currently serves as the president and owner of Bell & Associates Business Consultants, Inc., a value-added reseller of information technology where he collaborates with local and national clients. Community service is at the crux of Mr. Bell's life and purpose. During his time with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, when he was not on the field, he was organizing food drives, tutoring young African American students for their SATs and ACTs, and holding football camps. Mr. Bell has served on numerous local and non-profit boards and he is a proud member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Mr. Bell's steadfast commitment to advancing student achievement has produced transformative results in diversifying higher education. The Bells were the first African-American couple to endow a scholarship at the University of South Florida, and to date have been able to provide financial assistance to more than 100 students who have successfully obtained a college degree, crediting the Bells' scholarship for their ability to succeed. Currently, Mr. Bell is a founding member of a new initiative at the University of South Florida, the Black Leadership Network, which is focused on the pillars of scholarship, mentorship, and internships for Black students.

Mr. Bell's public service is recognized widely. He was named a Community Hero by the Tampa Bay Lightning Foundation. Additionally, Mr. Bell's commitment to students was hon-

ored by the University of South Florida through the President's Distinguished Citizen Award.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Tampa Bay community, I am proud to recognize Gerard (Jerry) A. Bell, for his selfless public service and commitment to educational success and his work in diversity and uplifting the Tampa Bay community one neighborhood at a time.

HONORING PHILLIP C. WEST

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable servant, Phillip C. West.

Mr. West was born and reared in Natchez, Mississippi, to the parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sam West. Mr. West attended and graduated from Sadie V. Thompson High School in 1964.

After completing high school, Mr. West advanced his career by enrolling at Alcorn State University, where he emerged as a student activist between 1966 and 1968. Demonstrating unwavering dedication, Mr. West ascended to the position of Vice-President of the Natchez NAACP from 1972 to 1974. His leadership continued to flourish as he assumed the role of President of the NAACP from 1974 to 1980.

He was elected and served on the Adams County Board of Supervisors from 1980 to 1997. Notably, in 1992, he achieved a historic milestone by becoming the first black individual to serve as President of the board. Following his tenure on the board, Mr. West was elected three times to the Mississippi House of Representatives, serving from 1997 to 2004. During his legislative tenure, he distinguished himself as a two-term chairman of the Mississippi Legislative Black Caucus.

In 2004, Mr. West continued to break barriers by being elected as Mayor of Natchez, marking the first time a black individual had held the position since Reconstruction.

Presently, Mr. West is serving as Vice-President of the Natchez-Adams School Board of Trustees for approximately (7) years. He is still active in many community affairs. He has continued his lifelong fight for equal opportunity, equal justice under law, and real progress for all.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Phillip C. West for his continuing dedication and tenacity to serving his community and desire to be an example for all.

RECOGNIZING BILLY MCKINNEY'S
CONTRIBUTIONS TO NORTH-
WESTERN UNIVERSITY ATH-
LETICS AND ITS COMMUNITY

HON. BRADLEY SCOTT SCHNEIDER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise today to recognize the outstanding achievements and public service of a basketball star, radio announcer, local mayor and my

good friend, William Mervin "Billy" McKinney, III.

On March 2, Northwestern Athletics, along with the Wildcats men's basketball program, will formally recognize Billy's athletic accomplishments and lifetime of community contributions with the retirement of his jersey number 30 during Northwestern's home game against Iowa. It marks the first time in school history that a student-athlete's jersey has been retired.

Billy McKinney played varsity basketball all four of his years at Northwestern (from 1973 through 1977). He is widely regarded as one of the greatest players in Northwestern basketball history. He set numerous records and earned many accolades during his collegiate career, including multiple All-Conference and All-America honors. Billy was inducted into Northwestern Athletic Hall of Fame in 1986.

Following his collegiate career, McKinney enjoyed a successful career in the NBA, first as a player and then a front office executive. His eight-year playing career included stints with the Kansas City Kings, Utah Jazz, Denver Nuggets, San Diego Clippers, and Chicago Bulls. McKinney's high energy play and his quickness on the court earned him the nickname "The Crazy Hummingbird."

After retiring as a player in 1985, McKinney transitioned to NBA front office management—working over 30 years with the Chicago Bulls, Minnesota Timberwolves, Detroit Pistons, Seattle SuperSonics and Milwaukee Bucks. McKinney made history as the first African American front office executive in Chicago Bulls franchise history.

Following his days as an NBA Executive, McKinney has dedicated himself to public service. Returning to his hometown of Zion, IL, Billy was elected mayor in 2019. Since then, he has worked tirelessly to improve housing, address environmental concerns, and improve economic opportunities for his constituents.

McKinney also remains actively involved with Northwestern University. He serves as the men's basketball radio color analyst and has a role with Northwestern University Development and Alumni Relations (NUDAR). The organization presents The Billy McKinney Award to the male student-athlete with outstanding leadership, effort, and a positive attitude.

As a player, Billy McKinney wore a medalion with the inscription: "They can conquer who believe they can." Billy McKinney's life story, his commitment and dedication to excellence, and his service to others set an example for us all.

As a fellow Northwestern University alum, I am pleased to recognize and celebrate his distinguished career and the well-deserved recognition bestowed on him by our alma mater. I wish Billy McKinney all the best in his future endeavors and continued success.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF JAMES
OLIVER FORD

HON. TRENT KELLY

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. KELLY of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the life of James Oliver Ford, known affectionately as J.O., Jimmy, Jim, or

Ford, who peacefully passed away at the age of 79 on Thursday, February 1, in Tupelo, Mississippi. He was the eldest child of the late Oliver Ford, Jr. and Annie Mae Ford of Pontotoc, Mississippi.

James embraced Christianity at a young age and remained a dedicated member of McDonald United Methodist Church in Pontotoc, Mississippi. He served his church fervently as an usher, choir member, assistant Sunday School teacher, and President of the McDonald United Methodist Church Board of Trustees.

Graduating from Pontotoc Attendance Center in 1963, James pursued higher education, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Political Science from Jackson State University in 1967. He actively participated in Civil Rights movements, notably joining the historic James Meredith March of 1966 from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi. Subsequently, he pursued a Juris Doctorate from the University of Mississippi in 1970.

Following his studies, James commenced his legal career, initially with North Mississippi Rural Legal Services in Oxford, Mississippi, before establishing his practice in Tupelo, Mississippi in 1973. He played a significant role in advocating for integration in school districts across North Mississippi, addressing violations of Brown v. Board of Education. Throughout his life, James remained committed to seeking justice for his clients, participating in free legal clinics and serving as the City Prosecutor for Baldwin, Mississippi.

Beyond his legal endeavors, he was elected President of the Concerned Citizens Coalition of Pontotoc. He also actively engaged in sports, particularly running and cycling, fostering camaraderie within the Pontotoc Runners and Bikers group.

James was a member of various organizations, including the Lee County NAACP, Black Business Association of Tupelo, and the Mississippi Bar Association. He also maintained a lifelong membership in Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

In recognition of his lifelong dedication to justice and peace, James was honored with the 2024 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drum Major Award by the Pontotoc MLK Dream Committee.

James is survived by his beloved wife, Rachel H. Ford; two sons, Steven Ford of Denver, CO and J. Corey Ford of Atlanta, GA; two daughters, Kristi Listenbee of Tupelo, MS and Ashley Listenbee of Atlanta, GA; four grandchildren, Antonio Lipsey, Kyle Ford, Matthew Rowe, and Laken Ruff; one great-granddaughter, Graycn; one brother, Barry Ford of Madison, MS; one sister, Phyllis (Rev. David) High of Pontotoc, MS; one brother-in-law, Hosie Holoman of Tupelo, MS; one sister-in-law, Joann (Barry) Ledbetter of Tupelo, MS; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, family, and friends who will cherish his memory dearly.

RECOGNIZING TAMPA BAY'S
TRAILBLAZER ANTONIO BROWN,
IN HONOR OF BLACK HISTORY
MONTH

HON. KATHY CASTOR

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today during Black History Month with appreciation of St. Petersburg native, small business owner and youth advocate, Antonio Brown. Through Mr. Brown's dedication to increasing children's literacy, especially Black and brown children, our youngest neighbors are empowered through stories and given the opportunity to turn the page on their lives to a new chapter filled with quality education and opportunity.

Mr. Brown was born in the Child's Park neighborhood of St. Petersburg, and he comes from a community-minded family. Mr. Brown's grandfather led recreation centers across the country and his grandmother helped babysit many neighborhood children. He was raised in a single-parent household and attended Boca Ciega High School and later took college courses at St. Petersburg College and St. Pete Technical College where he earned his plumbing certificate. In 2009, Brown graduated from the American Institute of Beauty.

Mr. Brown is a proud father of his son, Jaelyn and anecdotally, he strives to be a better man and father than the example he had.

Early in his career, Mr. Brown began as a telemarketer but knew this was not his calling. After spending time in meaningful reflection, he specifically thought about what was important to his life as a Black man and the impactful lessons his grandmother instilled in him while caring for children, bringing his new dream of becoming a barber and an impactful father to fruition.

While navigating fatherhood and an 18-month program to become a master barber, Mr. Brown knew his mission in life was to serve his community, particularly Black and brown youth. In 2015, he successfully opened his Barber Shop—Central Station Barbershop & Grooming—and in 2016, he began the Barbershop Book Club where kids could 'grow up in his chairs' and be surrounded by a positive environment that solidified their path for a chance at a better life.

When kids walk in for haircut at his Barber Shop, they have the option to receive their service for free, if they read a book aloud throughout the duration of the haircut. The children walk away with a fresh haircut and a new book to keep at no cost. In an effort to teach financial literacy, Mr. Brown encourages the families of the children to put the money they would have spent on the haircut, in a bank account for their child.

Mr. Brown curates a selection of books that are 'culturally relevant' and have characters that children recognize themselves in and stories that would teach them positive messages to do good in the world. After nine years of service to the St. Petersburg community through the Barbershop Book club, Mr. Brown has given out over 1,500 books and haircuts and expanded his shop to 10 different locations.

Mr. Brown's work with children's literacy has sparked local partnerships between beloved