

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

bookstores in the St. Petersburg area and notably the Shirley Proctor Puller Foundation, Junior League of St. Pete, and the Juvenile Welfare Board to ensure every child that comes to his Barber Shop has the opportunity to enhance their literary skills.

When Mr. Brown is not at the Barber Shop serving local children, he serves his neighbors as the 13th President of St. Pete Heights Neighborhood Association, a St. Petersburg Sunshine City Ambassador, and a Pinellas Barbering College Instructor.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the St. Petersburg community, I am proud to recognize Antonio Brown for his selfless community service and dedication to fostering a safe environment for children to grow and thrive. Mr. Brown's commitment to increasing childhood literacy is a priceless investment helping our future generations one haircut at a time.

HONORING THE REVEREND
GEORGE LEE MUSEUMS OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN HISTORY AND
HERITAGE

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 organization, The Reverend George Lee Museums of African American History and Heritage.

The Reverend George Lee Museums of African American History and Heritage is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located at 17150 Highway 49 in Belzoni, Mississippi.

Who is Rev. George W. Lee? Rev. George W. Lee was a pivotal figure in the fight for civil rights for Black Americans. He is recognized as the first person to die in this struggle. His name holds a place of honor as the first among 40 names listed on the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama. Rev. Lee was a prominent Baptist pastor in Belzoni, Mississippi, where he led a congregation. He was deeply committed to the cause of civil rights and served as a local official for the NAACP. Rev. Lee tirelessly encouraged his congregation to register and exercise their right to vote, recognizing that meaningful change for Black citizens in Mississippi, a state marked by racial discrimination, could only be achieved through the ballot box.

The mission of The Reverend George Lee Museums of African American History and Heritage is to safeguard and celebrate history, culture, arts, and heritage within the African American community. Through various programs and initiatives, the museum aims to increase awareness and appreciation of African American and Mississippi's history, while fostering racial harmony and a deeper understanding of cultural diversity. Collaborating with existing projects and organizations, as well as establishing new initiatives, the museum endeavors to preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage of the Mississippi Delta. The museum's primary focus areas include Blues, Gospel, Civil Rights, and the Arts.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing The Reverend George Lee Museums of African American History and Heritage for their passion and dedication to serving their community and the state of Mississippi.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF
ROBERT "BOB" RAMIREZ

HON. JIMMY GOMEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. GOMEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mourn the loss of Robert "Bob" Ramirez, who passed away at the age of 78.

Robert, a lifelong Angelino and founding member of the El Rio Veterans Collaborative, leaves behind a legacy of dedicated service and community leadership.

A proud graduate of Cathedral High School, Bob's career path led him from the Southern Pacific Railroad to the U.S. Air Force in 1965. His deployment to Vietnam in 1966 as a security police specialist with a scout patrol fire team earned him the Air Force Commendation Medal for his meritorious service.

Following his military service, Bob's commitment to advocacy and representation was evident in his role as general chairman for IBEW, where he tirelessly served for over 30 years.

His pursuit of knowledge culminated in a degree from California State University, Los Angeles, and he shared his expertise as a professor at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College. Bob's impact is felt not only through his professional and academic contributions but also through his role as a founding member of the El Rio Veterans Collaborative. He is survived by his wife, Caroline, and their two children.

Mr. Speaker, I hope everyone will join me in mourning the loss of Robert "Bob" Ramirez and celebrating his life of service.

CELEBRATING THE 10TH
ANNIVERSARY OF MxD

HON. MIKE QUIGLEY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 10th anniversary of MxD, a Chicago-area manufacturing innovation institute.

Manufacturing times Digital, of MxD, was announced by President Barack Obama on February 25, 2014 as a partnership between private sector and federal government military focusing on digital manufacturing and design. MxD advances national security and economic prosperity by strengthening U.S. manufacturing competitiveness through technological innovation, workforce development, and cybersecurity preparedness. With nearly 240,000 manufacturers and 14 million manufacturing workers in the United States, MxD's work in digital technology adoption, cybersecurity readiness, and workforce development is essential to national economic competitiveness.

Over the past decade, MxD has launched a virtual training center to educate the next generation of manufacturing sector employees, worked closely with the Department of Defense to modernize manufacturing facilities, and supported local and federal pandemic-related needs throughout the COVID-19 crisis. MxD has received numerous awards and been recognized consistently for its leadership and innovation. These are just a few accomplish-

ments that the institute has achieved over the past decade, and I am excited to see what comes next. With nearly 300 members across industry, academia, and government, MxD is constantly advancing the field of manufacturing, and I am honored to have such an organization here in my district.

RECOGNIZING TAMPA BAY'S
TRAILBLAZER DR. CYNTHIA
JOHNSON, 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 to celebrate a true public servant, Dr. Cynthia Johnson. Her commitment to service in the community began at an early age while she accompanied her mother on weekly deliveries for Meals on Wheels and participated in other community service endeavors. Dr. Johnson developed a compassionate determination to make a positive impact on others' lives. Her family's unwavering support, appreciation for diversity, and the passion to serve others have shaped her servant leadership style.

Dr. Johnson is a native of St. Petersburg, where she grew up as the youngest of eight children. Her early experiences in the local public school system instilled in her a deep appreciation for education. She is a first-generation college student and received her bachelor's degree in education from Florida Memorial University and a doctorate in educational leadership & organization from Nova Southeastern University. Dr. Johnson also received her certification from Cornell University in diversity, equity, and inclusion and she later received the distinguished certification as a Master Economic Development Practitioner.

Dr. Johnson has more than 24 years of experience in economic development and over 27 years in leadership training and development. She has worked in Pinellas County government since 2000, where she currently serves as the Director of Pinellas County Economic Development. In her dual role as the Director of the Pinellas County Economic Development and a community change agent, she is committed to lighting the way for others.

Dr. Johnson has a wealth of knowledge in diversity, equity and inclusion. She is a fierce advocate for public policies and business practices that lift people, businesses and non-profits agencies. As a trusted advisor to businesses large and small, government agencies, policymakers, and community leaders throughout Florida, she has built her career around the diverse and inclusive space of economic development. As an economic development practitioner, trainer, mentor, and educator, she has supported hundreds of individuals with the creation, retention, and expansion of their businesses. She specializes in partner relations, federal and state grants management and compliance, business and strategic planning, entrepreneurial development, finance, and small business innovation.

She is also passionate about cultivating the next generation of leaders and dedicates her free time to mentorship and community involvement. Dr. Johnson is a member of the St.