

Petersburg Chapter of the Links and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She has served on numerous boards including the Grow Smarter Steering Committee at the St. Petersburg Area Chamber, Chair of the Enterprise Florida Urban Working Group, Chair of Small Business Vendor Relations for Super Bowl XLIII in Tampa, and member of the Moffitt Cancer Center African American Advisory Board. She also actively supports the National Negro College Fund and advocates for participation in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) across the United States. Dr. Johnson is married to "the best husband ever," Kevin, and for over 21 years their four children and blended family have urged her on in service.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Tampa Bay community, I am honored to recognize the outstanding accomplishments, leadership and service of Dr. Cynthia Johnson and her dedicated commitment to diversity and uplifting her neighbors in the Tampa Bay community.

HONORING THE EMMETT TILL HISTORIC INTREPID CENTER

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 Emmett Till Historic Intrepid Center (E.T.H.I.C. Museum).

The Emmett Till Historic Intrepid Center, also known as the E.T.H.I.C. Museum, is situated in Glendora, Mississippi (Tallahatchie County). This historic town holds significance as the birthplace of Sonny Boy Williamson II, a legendary figure celebrated as the "King of the Harmonica." Since its inception in August 2005 under the visionary leadership of Mayor Johnny B. Thomas, the E.T.H.I.C. Museum has emerged as a beacon of remembrance and resilience, offering a sanctuary for reflection and education. As the first and sole museum dedicated to Emmett Till, the E.T.H.I.C. Museum holds a sacred responsibility to honor his memory and preserve his legacy. It stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of justice and reconciliation, bearing witness to the tumultuous chapters of history while striving to illuminate pathways towards healing and renewal.

Housed in a former cotton gin once owned by J.W. Milam, one of Emmett's abductors, the museum's mission is to provide an immersive, thought-provoking, and educational journey to preserve and celebrate the historical and cultural heritage of Glendora, Tallahatchie County, and Mississippi.

Through its diverse programs and initiatives, the museum seeks to raise awareness of African American and Mississippi's history, while promoting racial harmony and a deeper understanding of cultural diversity. By collaborating with existing projects and organizations and spearheading new initiatives, the museum endeavors to uphold and promote the rich cultural legacy of the Mississippi Delta.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing The Emmett Till Historic Intrepid Center, as a beacon of inspiration, driven by an unwavering dedication to enhancing our community and the esteemed state of Mississippi.

HONORING HIS EXCELLENCY MARKO DJURIC, AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA TO THE UNITED STATES

HON. ERIC SWALWELL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. SWALWELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the outstanding service of His Excellency Mr. Marko Djuric, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Serbia to the United States of America. Ambassador Djuric is an exceptional diplomat who has dedicated his career to expanding Serbia's relationships across the globe and shepherding his country's accession into the European Union.

Ambassador Djuric assumed his duties as Ambassador to the United States in January 2021. In his three years of diplomatic service in Washington D.C., Ambassador Djuric has made countless contributions to the 140-year-old United States-Serbia relationship.

In Congress, the Ambassador substantially expanded the Serbian Caucus, forging new relationships on Capitol Hill while strengthening bonds with American industry through a series of working visits.

I was proud to host him in my district last year to connect him with the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and some of California's most innovative and influential companies. I am hopeful that the Ambassador's visit to my district will lead to permanent partnerships in the areas of fundamental physics, critical materials development, and other pressing issues of our time.

Under Ambassador Djuric's leadership, the United States became Serbia's number one trade partner in software and IT services, and the Serbian-American Business Council was established to promote US businesses inside of Serbia. He has also worked to promote the Open Balkan Initiative, which aims to bring more political and economic stability to the Western Balkans region.

I have had the pleasure of visiting Serbia twice, with the Ambassador serving as my host and guide. During those trips, I met with the Serbian President to discuss assistance to Ukraine and visited United States businesses with significant operations in Belgrade. We've also discussed, at length, the unique impact that wine production has on our regions.

I have the honor of calling Ambassador Djuric a true friend. The people of Serbia and of the United States owe Ambassador Djuric thanks for his steadfast service to his homeland and for his honesty and curiosity about our shared future.

TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY GREENWOOD AUTISM CENTER

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Truman State University in my district in Missouri. Since 2015, Truman State and its partners have been working to create the Greenwood

Interprofessional Autism Center. The Greenwood Center is now fully operational.

But before I talk more about the new Center, let me tell you about Truman State University. Truman State was founded in 1867 in Kirksville, Missouri and is Missouri's only statewide public liberal arts and sciences university. Truman is consistently ranked among the nation's best colleges. For 26 consecutive years, U.S. News and World Report has recognized Truman as the No. 1 public university in the Midwest Regional category. They also gave Truman a No. 1 ranking for "Best Undergraduate Teaching," and Truman has rated No. 1 on the list of "Best Value Schools" in the region.

Autism is the fastest-growing developmental disorder in the United States. The Center will provide in-depth, interdisciplinary assessment and intervention for those with autism or suspected autism, as well as other neuro-developmental disorders in Northeast Missouri where these services do not exist. The Center will provide applied behavior analysis (ABA) services internally and work with a variety of external partners to meet the needs of the people the Center will serve. All partners will work within the Center's model and guidelines to ensure consistency, quality, and collaboration.

The Center also provides high-quality training for students at Truman State University. Licensed professionals will supervise Truman students enrolled in health-related academic programs (Applied Behavior Analysis, communication disorders, counseling, education, exercise science, health science, nursing, and psychology).

I congratulate Truman State and its partners for creating this Center that will bring invaluable and much needed resources to the families and children of Northeast Missouri.

RECOGNIZING TAMPA BAY'S TRAILBLAZER DR. KANIKA TOMALIN, 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 to honor and celebrate the remarkable contributions and achievements of a life-long servant leader, Dr. Kanika Tomalin. Dr. Tomalin has devoted her life to improving access and opportunity for the underserved—who are not undeserved of opportunity.

For more than a decade, Dr. Tomalin served in key leadership positions at Bayfront Health which fueled her passion for a healthier St. Petersburg. She is the first Black woman to serve as a healthcare executive at Bayfront Health and while there, she led the creation of the joint venture partnership that resulted in the formation of the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg.

In 2014, she was appointed St. Petersburg deputy mayor by Mayor Rick Kriseman and is the first Black woman to serve in that role. Dr. Tomalin helped launch numerous initiatives that have made St. Petersburg more vital, inclusive and healthier, including founding the Innovation District and Healthy St. Pete, which both helped reduce the Black poverty rate to

a new low. Ten years ago, Pinellas County ranked 38th of 67 counties in Florida for overall health and today, it ranks 17th. Also, out of Healthy St. Pete came St. Pete Eats: A Cookbook, which Dr. Tomalin published during the pandemic. It emphasizes healthy ingredients and recipes are taken from her own as well as from the city's independent restaurants as a salute to "the special role our small businesses play in this paradise of a place we call home." Proceeds from the book helped support small businesses affected by the public health crisis.

Before returning to the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg for her full circle moment, Dr. Tomalin was chief operating officer and vice president for strategy for Eckerd College in St. Petersburg. Now as president and chief executive officer of the Foundation, which has a mission to understand health disparities and support community-driven solutions to achieve health equity, Dr. Tomalin is passionate about helping to rewrite the story of St. Petersburg's underserved communities so they can attain their full potential.

As a fifth-generation St. Petersburg native, Dr. Tomalin is the oldest of two daughters born to Yvonne and David Jelks. She grew up in West St. Petersburg, attending Bay Point Elementary School, Bay Point Middle School, Tyrone Middle School and graduated from Boca Ciega High School. She says she had an idyllic childhood, cradled by her extended family of about 250 relatives, who mostly live in St. Petersburg or within miles. During her formative years, Dr. Tomalin was an Ebony Scholar, a program that provides institutional and financial support to high-achieving African-American students and was the vision of Vyrle Davis, an education giant who became Pinellas County's first Black area superintendent. Her interest in journalism began early—her childhood best friend's mother was an editor at the then-St. Petersburg Times. Dr. Tomalin received her bachelor's degree in journalism from Florida A&M University, her master's degree in business administration from the University of Miami and her doctorate in law and policy from Northeastern University.

Dr. Tomalin was a Poynter Institute scholar writing stories for the St. Petersburg Times when she met her future husband, sports and outdoors writer Terry Tomalin. They raised two children, Kai and Nia, and were married for 17 years until his passing in 2016.

Dr. Tomalin also worked at the Palm Beach Post and television stations in Tallahassee, Florida and Louisville, Kentucky, as well as radio in St. Petersburg.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize Dr. Kanika Tomalin, who is honorably carrying forward the legacy of her deeply rooted St. Petersburg family while making an indelible mark on progress for St. Petersburg, the Sunshine City that is moving along the margin of excellence from great to iconic where opportunity shines on all.

HONORING THE LIFE OF GWEN-DOLYN "GWEN" BENSON-WALKER

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Gwendolyn "Gwen" Elaine Benson-

Walker, my former chief of staff, who died on February 2, 2024.

Gwen worked for me in various capacities for 20 years, starting as my scheduler and ultimately becoming my chief of staff. As my chief of staff, Gwen fostered a collaborative environment and helped me hire the best and brightest for my office.

Gwen was also a devoted mother and grandmother, and had a passion for wellness, physical fitness, and world travel. After her retirement, Gwen traveled the world and lived in Spain from 2013 to 2022.

Gwen was not only beloved by her family, friends and colleagues, she was also beloved by me. I am honored to have known Gwen, and I will be forever grateful for her service to Congress, as well as to the District of Columbia.

Again, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in honoring the life of Gwen Benson-Walker.

RECOGNIZING DIRECTOR OF CASEWORK DECONTEE SAWYER FOR HER EXCELLENT WORK ON BEHALF OF MINNESOTA'S THIRD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

HON. DEAN PHILLIPS

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my Director of Casework, Deontee Sawyer, for her work on behalf of every constituent in Minnesota's Third Congressional District. This week, Deontee will depart my office for a new opportunity serving as Rep. ANGIE CRAIG's Casework Director, and I could not be more proud or grateful for her service.

As Director of Casework, Deontee masterfully led my casework operations and team of caseworkers, working tirelessly for our constituents. Deontee has always gone above and beyond to advocate for constituents, lending her expertise to a wide range of cases and crises. As a true servant-leader on the front lines, she restored Americans' faith in government one passport, immigration case, tax return, and VA benefit at a time.

A St. Cloud State University graduate, Deontee was an organizer on my first campaign in 2018, before joining my congressional staff as a Constituent Advocate. Her impressive success in that role and dedication to service led me to promote her to Director of Casework in 2023. From the beginning of her time with my office, Deontee demonstrated her commitment to our ethos that "Representation Begins with Listening" by connecting casework to policymaking. When Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) status was about to expire for the Liberian community, Deontee worked with our legislative team to introduce the bipartisan Protect Our Liberian Community Act. She and our team worked diligently on this issue until a pathway to citizenship for Liberians on DED was included in the NDAA that passed at the end of my first year in office.

Deontee has been our office ethos of "Radical Hospitality" personified for the past five years. She has been the heart of our casework team since our office opened—a role that allowed her to seamlessly blend her

professional experiences as a mental health professional and community organizer. No case has ever proven too big or too small for Deontee; she treats every constituent with an expert blend of professionalism and compassion. She has put her effortless way of connecting with people to work building authentic connections with communities throughout Minnesota's Third District.

Deontee's positive energy, radiant smile, enthusiasm for trivia, and inclination to dance after receiving good news on behalf of a constituent will be deeply missed by her colleagues. She has been a leader in our office, never afraid to share what is on her mind and stand up for her beliefs. Deontee knows the importance of bringing joy into work that can often feel heavy. She encourages team members to have fun in their jobs and celebrate hard-fought wins, and she demonstrates genuine care for her colleagues' wellbeing.

The people of Minnesota's Third Congressional District were lucky to have her expertise and leadership, and she will be dearly missed. However, I'm extraordinarily happy that this expertise will continue to serve the nation and the people of Minnesota's Second Congressional District. I wish Deontee all the best in her future endeavors and thank her for her five years of faithful service to this Nation.

RECOGNIZING TAMPA BAY'S TRAILBLAZER, GLORIA JEAN ROYSTER, 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, this Black History Month I rise to celebrate the life of a local trailblazer, author, and historian, Ms. Gloria Jean Royster.

Ms. Royster is a resident of north downtown Tampa where she regularly advocates for safer pedestrian access and infrastructure, and quality-of-life issues for residents living in her River Arts District neighborhood. In late 2022, she contributed to the story and history of Ashley Drive and the surrounding area for the City of Tampa's application for the Reconnecting Communities Grant Pilot Program/Ashley Drive Redesign Project. When the city was awarded the grant it shared credit with Ms. Royster for helping to tell Tampa's story as part of the application. Ms. Royster shared this significant achievement with some of the historic residents who were impacted by demolished communities and with her River Arts District community leaders. This project will include removal of an interstate ramp and open streets which fulfills a dream of Ms. Royster and her neighbors for direct pedestrian access to The Tampa Riverwalk.

She retired to Tampa to be a full-time tourist and ended up volunteering in her community. An avid Tampa history buff and researcher, Ms. Royster currently spends her time telling the story of Tampa through her signature Tampa History Postcards, which include many historical nuggets of Tampa's Black community. Ms. Royster helped erect the Madame Fortune Taylor Bridge Historical Marker (2018) in downtown Tampa and she is the creator of the Tampa Bay History Center Madame Fortune Taylor Walking Tour, which she led for