

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING BRETT MERLINA

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the service of one of my constituents, Emergency Medical Technician Brett Medina, of Pasco County MedFleet. Technician Merlina exemplifies the epitome of dedication and compassion. With unwavering commitment, Technician Merlina has consistently gone above and beyond the call of duty, showcasing exceptional skill and poise in the face of adversity. Whether responding to emergency calls or routine transports, Technician Merlina's professionalism and excellent patient care have undoubtedly made a profound impression on his patients and those he works with. His tireless efforts extend beyond his normal duties in the field, as he actively steps up as a field training officer, striving to empower new hires in our organization with his skills and knowledge. Technician Merlina looks to continue to move up in his profession and is starting Paramedic School this spring with aspirations to become a critical care Paramedic within his organization. His leadership and mentorship serves as an inspiration to his peers and aspiring first responders alike.

These are just a few examples of the hard work, dedication, eagerness to help, and servant leadership that Technician Merlina exhibits every day when he goes to work. He is a shining example of what it means to be a First Responder. His work ethic should be a benchmark for which other first responders should strive to attain. It is evident that Technician Merlina has made a profoundly positive impact on our community and is qualified to be recognized as a First Responder of the Year for Florida's 12th Congressional District.

HONORING JOHN J. CONNERS, JR.

HON. BRANDON WILLIAMS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Mr. WILLIAMS of New York. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor today to recognize Army veteran, John J. Connors, Jr., for his many years of service to our country and community.

John J. Connors, Jr. was drafted into the United States Army on August 11, 1970. He received basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey followed by Advanced Individual Training for Infantry at Fort Ord in California. John was sent to Vietnam where he served from January 10, 1971, until October 1971 with the American Division (23rd Infantry), and with the 11th and 198th Infantry Brigades in Chu Lai in the Central Highlands. On June 15, 1971, John was wounded in action and received the Purple Heart. In addition, John received the

National Defense Medal, the Vietnam Defense Medal, the Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device, the Bronze Star, and the Combat Infantry Badge. After Vietnam, he was stationed at Fort Carson Colorado and was discharged on February 14, 1972, with the rank of SP4.

After discharge, John married Mary Lou and together they raised three beautiful children: Kelly, Sean, and Shannon. They have 4 grandchildren.

John is a life member of VFW Post 2246 and served on the E-Board. He is also a life member and the current 1st Vice Commander of Henry Post 24 American Legion where he served four terms as Commander and also held the positions of Chaplain, Color Guard, and E-Board member. He has been a member of the Rome Veterans Council and is a life member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart and Disabled American Veterans.

On behalf of New York's 22nd District, I am pleased to recognize the service and accomplishments of John J. Connors, Jr., and thank him for his courage and dedication.

HONORING MAGNOLIA ANUAL FORDE AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR ASIAN AMERICAN AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, Magnolia Anual Forde was born on December 28, 1964, in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, Philippines, and is the daughter of Remy and Thelma Anual. She graduated from West Negros College with a Bachelor of Arts in English.

On August 25, 1988, at the age of 23, Magnolia immigrated to the United States with the help of an American veteran couple from Florida whom she was a caretaker for. They sent her to nursing school and helped with her room and board. During her free time, she used to volunteer in the school's cafeteria during lunchtime. She also was a volunteer server for the South Venice Firefighter Spaghetti Dinner, which raised funds for the local fire department.

In 1990, Magnolia met her husband and has been married to him for 33 years and counting. She is a member of the Central Florida Filipino Helping Hands Association, a community organization that helps Filipino families in the Central Florida area get back on their feet when facing hardship. In her free time, Magnolia volunteers at the Osceola Council on Aging. She also volunteers at Commissioner Viviana Janer's food distribution events throughout the year. Currently, she is working at the VA Hospital in Lake Nona as a mid-institute instrument tech, preparing veterans for cardiovascular evaluation. In her role, Magnolia has received numerous outstanding per-

formance evaluations and accolades for her care of veterans. She is very proud to serve those who served and advocates for timely care.

Magnolia remains a proud resident of Osceola County and overall enjoys her time assisting her community and partaking in various festivals and activities around the area.

RECOGNIZING JARED BUNCH

HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jared Bunch for earning the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth Award.

Jared has overcome many challenges along his journey to success, demonstrating perseverance at every step. Students who strive to make the most of their education, like Jared, develop crucial skills and a work ethic that will guide them for the rest of their lives. This award is a testament to Jared's hard work, determination, and perseverance at Ralston Valley High School and is clearly just the beginning of a bright and promising future.

It is my honor to congratulate Jared Bunch on achieving the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth Award.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF JOHN J. CONYERS, JR. BY COMMENDING HIS ACHIEVEMENTS ON HIS 95TH BIRTHDAY

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the life and achievements of John James Conyers Jr., my friend, civil rights advocate, esteemed representative from Detroit, Michigan, and former Chair of the House Judiciary Committee.

Today, May 16, 2024, marks his 95th Birthday.

Congressman Conyers served 52 years as a U.S. Representative from three different districts in Detroit, Michigan from 1965 to 2017.

He was one of the longest serving members of the United States Congress and the longest serving African-American Member of Congress.

Mr. Conyers won his first election to Congress with 108 votes more than his opponent.

Following that election, he won reelections with 80 percent of the vote for the rest of the time he served as an elected member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

During his earlier years, education was the road to success.

After graduating from Northwestern High School, Mr. Conyers served in the Michigan

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

National Guard from 1948 to 1950; the U.S. Army from 1950 to 1954; and the U.S. Army Reserves from 1954 to 1957.

He served during the Korean War as an officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and was awarded combat and merit citations.

After discharge from the military, he earned both his B.A (1957) and Law Degree (1958) from Wayne State University.

Once admitted to the bar, he was an aide to Congressman John Dingell.

He also served as counsel to several Detroit-area labor union locals, and was a referee for Michigan's workmen's compensation department (1961–1963);

John Conyers was one of 13 U.S. Representatives who cofounded the Congressional Black Caucus in 1969 and helped create the CBC Foundation.

During his time in the House of Representatives he sat on the House Committee on the Judiciary where he rose in seniority to become the Ranking Democratic member from 1995 to 2007 and again from 2011 to 2017.

Mr. Conyers became Chairman of the Judiciary Committee from 2007 to 2011; and served as chairman of the House Oversight Committee from 1989 to 1995.

He was the longest-serving member of Congress, and in that capacity, he was the Dean of the House of Representatives from 2015 to 2017.

His longstanding credentials were sharpened by his work to establish equity and fairness for all.

In March 2016, Mr. Conyers and Representative HANK JOHNSON introduced legislation to protect consumers' access to civil courts entitled the "Restoring Statutory Rights Acts".

Mr. Conyers was a sponsor of the United States National Health Care Act (Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act), a bill he reintroduced each session until his retirement from the House.

Another prominent bill Mr. Conyers sponsored was the "Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act" in January 1989.

He also re-introduced this bill each congressional term in which he served.

H.R. 40 calls for establishing a commission to research the history of slavery in the United States and its effects on current society with recommended ways to remedy this injustice. Since 1997, the bill has been designated "H.R. 40".

Upon leaving the House, he passed the responsibility for H.R. 40 to me.

I introduced H.R. 40 in the 117th and each Congress thereafter.

My bill does four things: It acknowledges the fundamental injustice and inhumanity of slavery; It establishes a commission to study slavery, its subsequent racial and economic discrimination against freed slaves; It studies the impact of those forces on today's living African Americans; and the commission would then make recommendations to Congress on appropriate remedies to redress the harm inflicted on living African Americans."

John Conyers as a former "Dean" of the Congressional Black Caucus, also joined the American Sikh Congressional Caucus; Congressional Progressive Caucus; United States Congressional International Conservation Caucus; Out of Afghanistan Caucus (Co-chair); Congressional Full Employment Caucus; Congressional Arts Caucus; Afterschool Cau-

cuses; and the Congressional NextGen 9–1–1 Caucus.

John Conyers was a dedicated public servant who worked for the good of his constituents and the Nation.

I offer thanks to him and his family for the legacy he has left for those who continue to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ANDRÉ CARSON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Mr. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the chair closed the tally as I was attempting to vote on Roll Call No. 217. I would have voted NAY on H.R. 8369, to preserve President Biden's ability to carry out decisions for our national security. The bill condemns President Biden for his policy adjustment on arms sales to Israel and would prevent both the Administration and Congress from slowing weapons transfers in light of credible evidence of human rights violations.

RECOGNIZING ERIK ORTIZ

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the service of one of my constituents, Firefighter/Paramedic Erik Ortiz, of the Brooksville Fire Department. Firefighter/Paramedic Ortiz has worked for the City since November 2021. From day one, he has left an impression on those he works alongside, as this young man carries himself in a professional manner, is always upbeat, positive, and does not complain about anything. He is a member of the Local 4661, serves as Coordinator for our Community Outreach CPR Program, coordinates Supply/Restock for the department, and organizes the city's Fire Department Merchandise Program. While he still relatively young in his career, Firefighter/Paramedic Ortiz seems wise beyond his years and operates in a manner that brings great credit to himself, his family, the City, and the citizens he serves.

These are just a few examples of the hard work, dedication, eagerness to help, and servant leadership that Firefighter/Paramedic Ortiz exhibits every day when he goes to work. He is a shining example of what it means to be a Brooksville First Responder. His work ethic should be a benchmark for which other first responders should strive to attain. It is evident that Firefighter/Paramedic Ortiz has made a profoundly positive impact on our community and is qualified to be recognized as a First Responder of the Year for Florida's 12th Congressional District.

HONORING PRAYONG DEEYING AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR ASIAN AMERICAN AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, Prayong Deeying was born in Surin, Thailand. He received a full scholarship, "Krome Pra-ya Dhumrong," from the Thai Royal Family to study fine arts at Silpa Korn University in Bangkok, Thailand.

After receiving his BFA in sculpting, he was employed by the United States Army as an art instructor and did freelance work as well. Prayong is recognized as an accomplished artist in Thailand. He was honored by having four life-sized sculptures placed on permanent exhibition in the Ancient City Park in Bangkok.

Prayong moved to the U.S. in 1974 and received a master's in painting from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana. After graduating, he taught art for 10 years at St. Mary's High School in Natchitoches. He received numerous juried art show awards. In 1985, he was one of 17 artists selected for Louisiana Limited Edition 1, a publication from a non-profit organization supporting the arts in Louisiana.

In 1987, he relocated to Orlando, Florida, where he worked as a preparatory artist and senior preparatory artist at Walt Disney World. As a cast member, he was an active VolunTEAR.

Once in Florida, he became close to the Thai community through his association with Wat Florida Dhammaram in Kissimmee. He has honored his parents' tradition of community service, as his parents and aunt and uncle donated the land to build the primary school and a Temple in their hometown of Surin by assisting in organizing ceremonies, fundraising, and supporting his fellow congregates.

In 1994, Phra Tepvaraporn, the founder of Wat Florida Dhammaram, and Phra Wijitdhammapani, the abbot of the Temple, honored him by requesting he act as president of the congregation, a role he continues to fill today.

From 2000 to 2003, he voluntarily sculpted, cast, and installed two 16-foot Giant Guards to grace the exterior of the Temple, sharing traditional Thai art with the community.

In 2014, he was recruited by the Asian-American Heritage Council to represent the Central Florida Thai community. He served a term as chair of that organization and continues to support the council by assuring Thai representation continues.

Since retiring from this role in 2007, he has continued his support of the Temple and the Asian-American community, as well as participating in several "Walks for Peace"—an event organized by Buddhist monks across the U.S. in which groups walk from Key West, Florida to Niagara Falls, New York.

Prayong lives in Ocoee, Florida, surrounded by friends and family, including his daughter Gibb, his son Michael, his granddaughters Faith, Grace, and Ellie, and his wife Cindy.