

this cause was rooted in his deepseated belief that the Second Amendment was essential to preserving all other freedoms.

Ed also championed the rights of farmers and the agricultural community in Niagara County. Recognizing the challenges faced by rural areas under the current political system, he was a vocal advocate for Rural Electoral Equity. He argued that rural communities were politically disenfranchised, with power disproportionately concentrated in urban centers like New York City. Ed believed this imbalance undermined the principles of a republic, where all regions should have an equal voice in governance.

His advocacy extended to challenging the 1964 Supreme Court ruling in "Reynolds v. Sims," which mandated that Senate districts be apportioned based on population rather than by county. Ed contended that this ruling led to political gerrymandering that favored urban areas at the expense of rural communities, affecting key issues such as gun control, energy, land use, and criminal justice.

Ed's vision was to make Niagara County a leading example of how rural areas could assert their rights and push back against state overreach. He worked tirelessly to build coalitions with other counties, strengthen local government, and create barriers to state infringement. As part of his efforts to support the agricultural community, Ed helped form the Niagara County Agricultural Rights Advisory Panel, ensuring that the voices of local farmers were heard and their rights protected. His contributions to the community were recognized through several awards, including the 2018 Ken Burner Memorial Award and the 2022 Oliver Jones Memorial Award Sportsperson of the Year from the Niagara County Federation of Conservation Clubs, Inc.

Above all, Ed was a devoted family man. He married his high school sweetheart, Lisa (Bowers) Pettitt, in 1981, and together they raised four sons: Edward II, Jonathon, Michael, and Thomas. He was a loving grandfather to five grandchildren, with whom he shared his love of the outdoors, including fishing, camping, kayaking, and farming.

Edward D. Pettitt, Sr. will be remembered as a man of integrity, a fierce defender of constitutional rights, and a tireless advocate for rural communities. His legacy lives on through his family, his community, and the many lives he touched with his unwavering commitment to freedom, justice, and the principles upon which this Nation was founded.

HONORING THE LIFE OF LOYAL
MARTIN (MARTY) GRIFFIN, JR.

HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 16, 2024

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Loyal Martin (Marty) Griffin Jr., MD, MPH who passed away on May 22, 2024, at the age of 103. Marty was a trailblazing environmental leader, renowned for his early focus on the intersectionality of healthcare and the environment. He made profound impacts on both fields.

Born in 1920 and raised in a mountain cabin along the Ogden River in Utah, Marty developed an appreciation of nature at an early

age. His family moved to the West Coast during the Depression, eventually settling in Oakland, California where Marty was an Eagle Scout and the valedictorian of Oakland Technical High School. He earned a zoology degree from the University of California, Berkeley in 1942 and worked night shifts in the Richmond shipyards to afford Stanford Medical School. After receiving his medical degree in 1946, Marty joined the United States Army Medical Corps and served as a captain during the end of World War II.

Marty's career in the medical profession quickly expanded to include environmental work, as he recognized the convergence of these two fields and their relationship to public health. He became a distinguished physician in Marin County, establishing the Ross Valley Clinic, Ross General Hospital, Tamalpais Retirement Center, and Kentfield Psychiatric Hospital. He also served as Chief of Medicine at both Marin General and Ross Hospitals.

Marty returned to the University of California, Berkeley in 1972 where he earned a master's degree in public health and subsequently became the Public Health Director of the Sonoma Developmental Center, a position he held for 15 years. In 1980, he was appointed Chief of the Hepatitis B, and later AIDS, Task Force for 11 state hospitals. In 1989, he received the Gold Medal for Superior Medical Accomplishment from the State of California.

Marty's passion for land preservation and environmental education extended beyond his professional career. In 1961, he founded Audubon Canyon Ranch, which now includes 5,000 acres of wildlife sanctuaries throughout the Bay Area and Sonoma County and is a model of conservation education. This land created the "gateway" to the Point Reyes National Seashore and Golden Gate National Recreation Area that were later established in 1962 and 1972. Marty also cofounded the Environmental Forum of Marin, and he served as an elected official as a director of the Marin Municipal Water District. He created a model for watershed management plans through his founding of the Russian River Task Force, Friends of the Russian River, and the Russian River Environmental Forum. Beyond California, Marty helped establish a 20,000-acre preserve in Haleakalā National Park and participated in wildlife efforts in Nepal.

Marty's lifetime of work inspired many, including the documentarians Nancy Kelly and Kenji Yamamoto who, in 2013, created the film *Rebels with a Cause*, detailing his and other local conservationists' fight to stop development along the Marin County coastline. What would have been a large development is now public land enjoyed by thousands of visitors every year in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Known fondly as "the nature doctor" and "the doctor with mud on his shoes," Marty is survived by his wife, Joyce Griffin; daughters Linda Henke, Anne Oliver, Carol Griffin and Joanie Griffin; stepson Brian Nielsen; and five grandchildren. He is predeceased by his granddaughter, Gina Marin Monaco, who passed in 1998 at age 15 from leukemia.

Mr. Speaker, Martin Griffin was an innovative leader who never shied from an opportunity to advocate for our environment and the health of future generations. It was my privilege to know Marty and consider him a friend. His legacy in Marin County, California, and be-

yond cannot be understated. I respectfully ask that you join me in expressing my appreciation for his lifetime of good work.

RECOGNIZING THE ASSYRIAN COMMUNITY IN CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY

HON. JOHN S. DUARTE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 16, 2024

Mr. DUARTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Assyrian community in the Central Valley of California. In particular, Stanislaus County has had a long history of Assyrians seeking refuge from religious persecution and genocide in their ancestral homelands known as Mesopotamia. This vibrant and thriving community is determined to preserve the language, heritage, culture, and their identity as Christians.

Over fifty thousand Assyrian Americans call Stanislaus County home. The 10th Anniversary of the Assyrian Festival hosted by the Assyrian Church of the East local parishes bring thousands of visitors to the Turlock Fairgrounds to celebrate the rich heritage, cuisine, and traditional dances of the Assyrian culture. The Assyrian language, heritage, and culture form the bedrock of Assyrian communities in the Central Valley, which anchors them in traditions that span millennia while also acting as guiding lights that propel them successfully forward while preserving their unique narrative. In addition, the Assyrian Church of the East's most ancient faith dating back to the first century of Christianity offers this community spiritual nourishment. This heritage instills pride, and the language and culture fosters unity. Together, they empower the Assyrian people worldwide to preserve the rich legacy and advance as a vibrant community, forging connections across generations and continents, ensuring their enduring presence in the tapestry of humanity.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House to join me in proudly recognizing the Assyrian community in the Central Valley of California for its invaluable contributions to our Nation's history, culture, and prosperity as we celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Assyrian Festival this month.

RECOGNIZING THE WORK OF THE
THOMPSON FAMILY FOUNDATION

HON. J. LUIS CORREA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 16, 2024

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the work of the Thompson Family Foundation for Autism and Neurodevelopment, which supports families with loved ones who have autism and other neurodevelopment conditions. Their multifaceted approach raises awareness, advances public policy, and spearheads philanthropic efforts for this amazing cause.

The Thompson Foundation partners actively with the Lestonnac Free Clinic, located in the heart of Orange. The Lestonnac Clinic shares the same philanthropic vision as the Thompson Foundation, and their contributions have

positively impacted the health and well-being of many of our low-income residents.

Since the Foundation's inception nearly two decades ago, founders Billy and Nancy Thompson have fostered an environment that places families and their concerns first. To date, the Thompson Family Foundation has helped conduct over 5,000 autism spectrum disorder diagnostic evaluations through the Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopment at the University of Missouri.

In addition, the foundation contributes equipment, like that used for cardiac and vision screening, and has recently led the expansion of patient examination rooms at the Lestonnac Clinic. The Foundation is currently funding efforts to open the Nation's first dedicated free surgery center, which would allow uninsured community members to receive non-life-threatening surgery procedures, like hernia repairs or colonoscopies, that are often neglected.

Providing quality health services to our community is critical—and through the Thompson Family's involvement and leadership, the Lestonnac Clinic will be able to continue providing essential preventative care to their patients.

I'd like to thank Billy and Nancy, important leaders in our Orange County community who have demonstrated their commitment to caring for our children and families. The work of the Thompson Family Foundation continues to be an important cornerstone of support for healthcare services to our district's low-income and uninsured residents, and I join our community in thanking them for the great work they do.

RECOGNIZING INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY 2024

HON. JAMIE RASKIN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 16, 2024

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in celebration of the International Day of Democracy, which was Sunday, September 15. This day is an opportunity to promote the principles of democracy and freedom against an alarming resurgence of authoritarianism and fanaticism across the globe.

The enemies of freedom seek to destabilize and destroy the constitutional democracies.

It is estimated that in 2024 alone, two billion people across 64 countries will have exercised their right to self-determination at the ballot box. But already, we have also witnessed sham elections, most notably in Bangladesh, Belarus, Venezuela and Russia, where the incumbent regimes suppressed political opposition and manipulated the electoral process.

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of democracy and the foundation of a free society. Yet, far too many dictators, budding autocrats and monarchists of the world have undermined the will of the people, using coups d'etat and electoral autocracy to stifle democratic voices. According to Freedom House, a leading American organization devoted to the support and defense of democracy around the world, in 2023, political rights and civil liberties were diminished in 52 countries, while just 21 countries made improvements.

In June, I met Dr. Amir Khasru Chowdhury, a leader in the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Dr. Chowdhury was arrested on dubious charges three months before Bangladesh's January 2024 elections. He languished in prison for six months until the Bangladeshi government, then controlled by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, conveniently released him two months after ballots had been cast. Dr. Chowdhury was not alone in his politically motivated imprisonment; his was one of nearly 8,000 arrests of BNP leaders and political dissidents. But despite the government's sinister ploy to subvert the electoral process, Dr. Chowdhury and the other jailed Bangladeshi dissidents were vindicated, and their cause ultimately prevailed. After a historic youth-led movement to end Prime Minister Hasina's despotic reign, the Bangladeshi people have earned the right to redirect their future. It's now time for the international community to support the fundamental principles of democratic governance in Bangladesh.

Meantime in Hong Kong, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) continues to erode the city's political independence. In July, a Hong Kong court taken over by the CCP denied a request to resume the trial of pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai. The case prosecuting Mr. Lai for what is essentially a "thought crime" lays bare the CCP's authoritarian takeover of the once-free Hong Kong. I was proud to adopt Jimmy Lai as a prisoner of conscience through the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's Defending Freedoms Project and will continue to passionately advocate for his release.

Jimmy Lai is not the only prisoner of conscience detained by an autocratic regime. In July, I wrote a letter to President Biden and Secretary Blinken urging the administration to demand the release of those wrongfully imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for exercising their basic human rights. Thousands of courageous activists, journalists, religious clerics, and human rights defenders have been silenced for simply speaking out about their dreams for democracy—such as their desire to move freely, speak openly and wear whatever they choose. In response to their impassioned advocacy, the repressive Saudi Arabian regime has unjustly imprisoned critical voices, issued violent threats, and imposed severe travel bans. This draconian reign of terror must end immediately.

The governments of Bahrain, Turkey, Belarus and numerous other nations are also holding prisoners of conscience hostage to suppress the voices of their fellow citizens. Our foreign policy must not overlook these human rights violations, be it governments' subversion of electoral processes, obstruction of justice, or the crushing of dissent. I invite my colleagues to use their various platforms to support prisoners of conscience everywhere to tell their stories in the pursuit of justice. Joining the Defending Freedoms Project is one excellent avenue to do so.

In 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that democracy and voting rights could shrink and shrivel away or grow and expand. Today, our world is embroiled in a period of democratic backsliding. In reverence to the International Day of Democracy, I'm asking each of my colleagues to join me in boldly advocating for democracy and freedom across the world.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF CHARLES PRIORE

HON. TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 16, 2024

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the life and legacy of a fallen hero and pillar of the Western New York community—Charles "Chuck" Priore.

Born in Buffalo, New York on December 15, 1975, Chuck was the youngest of three boys born to Charley and Laurie Priore. After graduating from Bishop Timon High School in 1994, Chuck entered the workforce and ultimately landed a job as a hazardous materials specialist with EarthTech.

While working for EarthTech, Chuck traveled throughout the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic. In the weeks leading up to the September 11th terror attacks, Chuck and his co-workers were assigned to a job in Queens. When the attacks occurred, his team was redirected from their job site to the World Trade Center where they worked in 24-hour continuous shifts cleaning up debris from the fallen towers. His life and the lives of his future wife and children were forever changed by the time he spent doing his job, serving his country, and answering the call in the days following the attacks.

In the months following, Chuck returned home to Buffalo and joined Laborers' Union Local 210. In 2008, two years after the birth of his son, Kevin, he became a Corrections Officer with the Erie County Sheriff's Office and served in that role until 2021.

In the fall of 2009, Chuck met his now-wife, Cate Flanagan, at the Buffalo Irish Center. They later moved into the same neighborhood that Chuck grew up in to start their lives together and raise a family. On June 25, 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Chuck was diagnosed with bladder cancer linked to his time at the World Trade Center after the 9/11 attacks. He underwent treatment and surgery but passed away on August 17, 2024, after being admitted to hospice care.

Chuck's passing leaves behind his beloved wife Cate, and two children, Kevin and Ciara who now face life without him. His sacrifice is a solemn reminder of the lasting impact of dedicated service in the face of tragedy. As we remember Charles "Chuck" Priore we grieve the loss of a beloved friend and dedicated public servant and find solace in knowing that his legacy lives on.

HONORING THE LIFE OF THOMAS CARE REED

HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 16, 2024

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise with Congressman MIKE THOMPSON to honor Thomas Care Reed, who passed away at the age of 89 on February 11, 2024, and his extensive public service to the United States and local Sonoma County community. Mr. Reed served as the 11th Secretary of the United States Air Force and was a dedicated public servant to three former Presidents.