

Team. Upon graduation, he worked at his family's car dealership until 1979. Ray felt a calling for public service and launched his political career as a fieldman for Ronald Reagan's Presidential Campaign from 1979 to 1980. After helping President Reagan win his election, Ray served as a personal assistant for Governor Bill Clements for four years, before going back to his family's Chevrolet dealership in 1984. He is proud to have played a part in expanding Huffines Auto Dealerships to ten dealerships across North Texas today.

Ray's exceptional work was recognized when he was awarded Business Executive of the Year in 2008 and Corporate Citizen of the Year in 2013 by the Plano Chamber of Commerce and was awarded Texas A&M University's Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2019.

Ray's commitment to service continued through his roles with the Plano Rotary Club, Chamber and Economic Development Board. Additionally, his involvement includes board membership at Dallas Baptist University, Trinity Christian Academy, and the 12th Man Foundation for Texas A&M, to name a few. Ray is a man of faith and attends Bent Tree Bible Fellowship Church. I commend Ray for his dedicated service to the people of our community and wish him continued success for many years to come.

It is an honor to bestow Ray with the Patriot Award for his exceptional service to the people of our Nation and the people of North Texas.

COMMEMORATING THE ONE-YEAR
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ATTACK
ON ARTSAKH

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the one-year anniversary of Azerbaijan's military assault on the Republic of Artsakh, which began on September 19, 2023, following its long-term blockade of the Lachin Corridor. Their unjustified use of military force resulted in the surrender of the Artsakh government and the unprecedented expulsion of over 100,000 residents from their ancestral homes.

Despite promises and assurances that there would be no such attack, Azerbaijan used the language of "anti-terrorist operations" to justify its military assault on the peaceful inhabitants of Artsakh. Yet, Azerbaijan's blockade of the region since December 12, 2022 provided a clear warning of what was to come. When Azerbaijan's military forces closed the Lachin Corridor, the narrow strip of traversable land between Artsakh and Armenia, the United Nations and U.S. officials called on the Azerbaijani government to lift the blockade, which had caused a massive region-wide humanitarian crisis. Azerbaijan refused and the blockade remained in place until September 2023 when Azerbaijan's military commenced its assault. By then, the blockade had already crippled Artsakh due to the lack of essential goods and services, including food and fuel. The blockade was so devastating in its isolation of Artsakh that its inhabitants suffered from severe malnutrition, including a fourfold increase in the number of recorded miscarriages compared to the previous year. The

blockade created such a humanitarian crisis that the International Association of Genocide Scholars warned of the risk of genocide against the Armenian population in the region.

Then came the military assault. After more than nine months of the blockade, Azerbaijan launched a military offensive on September 19, 2023. The following day, the government of Artsakh was forced to surrender to the invading force. Azerbaijan took many of the senior political leadership of the government of Artsakh as prisoners and continues to hold eight high-ranking officials of the former Republic of Artsakh, as well as several other officials and civilians. In November 2023, I introduced House Resolution 861, which calls on Azerbaijan to immediately comply with international commitments regarding the release and treatment of prisoners of war, hostages, and other detained persons. Yet, one year after its military assault, Azerbaijan continues to illegally hold the officials and civilians from Artsakh.

Additionally, since Azerbaijan's occupation of Artsakh, the risk of the intentional destruction of Armenian cultural heritage has only grown. There are nearly 500 Armenian cultural heritage sites in Artsakh and the surrounding region that have significant value to not only the global Armenian community, but also to the entire world. Yet, Azerbaijan has now embarked on a campaign to destroy these sites and erase Armenian heritage. To prevent the further destruction of these Armenian cultural heritage sites, I wrote a letter, co-signed by a bipartisan group of 47 fellow Members of the House of Representatives, to urge Secretary of State Antony Blinken to prioritize this issue in bilateral meetings with officials from the government of Azerbaijan.

However, the inescapable tragedy in this sad story is one of human suffering. The tragedy of Azerbaijan's actions one year ago can be measured in the lives that were inexplicably disrupted—over 100,000 residents who were forcibly displaced from their homes only to become refugees in neighboring Armenia. These displaced persons had homes, jobs, farms, businesses—full lives—in Artsakh. They had the ability to generate a revenue and to live with dignity in their ancestral homeland. Through no fault of their own, the Azerbaijani attack disrupted their lives, forcing them to flee to Armenia and seek shelter as refugees.

The government of Armenia has compassionately and courageously provided assistance to the refugees from Artsakh from a sense of moral duty and obligation to international norms. However, the responsibility to shoulder the costs incurred from the displacement of nearly every resident of Artsakh should fall on the government of Azerbaijan. This liability must include payments for the lost revenue that the residents of Artsakh would have generated had the attack and the subsequent displacement not occurred. To address this tragic situation, I introduced the Artsakh Revenue Recovery Act, a bill that not only places the liability for lost revenue on the government of Azerbaijan, but also establishes a mechanism by which those who lost the ability to generate revenue could receive compensation, even if the government of Azerbaijan refuses to do so. This mechanism involves the seizure of Azerbaijan's sovereign assets in the United States, and then transferring those assets to the Artsakh Revenue Recovery Fund.

The Fund will compensate the lost revenue of those who were displaced from Artsakh until Azerbaijan decides to accept the responsibility for paying compensation to these victims. The compensation is for the lost revenue from jobs and property in Artsakh and does not impact the ownership status of any property. The original property owners will continue to have the right to return to their property.

Azerbaijan must accept responsibility for the enormous humanitarian crisis that its blockade and military assault on Artsakh created. It must release the hostages and prisoners and commit to the preservation of Armenian cultural heritage. It must assure those who have property in Artsakh the ability to return to their ancestral home and to rebuild their lives and ease the suffering of refugees now. Azerbaijan must accept the responsibility to compensate lost revenue of those who left Artsakh. This compensation cannot fully address the disruption to lives. But, it is an important start to address the current suffering of those who lost so much.

On the one-year anniversary of Azerbaijan's assault on Artsakh, we remember the broken promises, the human suffering, and the continued tragedy that has fallen on those who were displaced from Artsakh. We stand with those who were forcibly displaced from Artsakh. We stand for justice.

RECOGNIZING VANCE LELLI

HON. MARILYN STRICKLAND

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Ms. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Vance Lelli, who retired earlier this month from his positions as a committed longshoreman and as head of the Pierce County Central Labor Council. He also served over two decades on the Washington State Labor Council Central Committee.

The Lelli family are known for their instrumental role in attracting new businesses and economic opportunities to the Port of Tacoma and transitioning it into one of the principal ports of entry on the Pacific Coast. Vance Lelli has built upon this legacy in his own way, profoundly impacting our local longshoremen and women and the broader labor community in Washington State.

Throughout his career, Vance has been a tireless advocate for working people, championing their rights and welfare with dedication. His efforts have strengthened working conditions and are supporting working families and retirees across the state. On behalf of the thousands of union households in the South Sound, I thank Vance for his decades of service and leadership. His contributions have made a lasting difference. I wish him all the best as he begins this new chapter of his life.

Congratulations to Vance.

RECOGNIZING THE PRESIDENTIAL
SERVICE BADGE FOUNDATION

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the work of the Presidential Service Badge

Foundation, a new organization seeking to raise awareness about the importance of public service by empowering servicemembers and their families.

Through philanthropic efforts, including a newly launched scholarship fund, the Foundation seeks to raise awareness of the connection between family and our military. Additionally, the Foundation seeks to showcase the honored men and women who earn the Presidential Service Badge through non-partisan support to the Office of the President.

As the Dean of the Massachusetts and New England Delegations, I would like to join Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey in recognizing this organization and commending them for their support of those who have served our democracy. I am proud of the fact that New England is home to more Presidential Service Badge recipients than any other region in the country, with over 2,000 in Massachusetts alone. I thank them for their hard work, and I wish them many more years of success and prosperity.

RECOGNIZING CONGRESSIONAL PATRIOT AWARD RECIPIENT SAM PACK

HON. PAT FALLON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Mr. FALLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Sam Pack of Dallas, Texas, and present him with the Congressional Patriot Award. Sam has dedicated himself to faithfully serving our community.

Sam was born in Stephenville, Texas, and attended Tarleton State College to study business. As a young man, he worked at his family's gas station and convenience store, as well as Piggly Wiggly and Safeway. Sam began working for the Ford Motor Credit Company in 1962 and rose up the ranks to become a Branch Manager. As a result of his expertise in the automobile industry, he decided to pursue a career as a full time dealer. In February of 1980, Sam purchased Lee Jarmon Ford, now known as the Sam Pack Auto Group. For over 40 years, the Sam Pack Auto Group has continued to provide North Texas residents with excellent auto and customer care through a focus on employee success, personal growth, and community outreach.

For his outstanding entrepreneurship, Sam has received countless awards, including Business of the Year, Retailer of the Year, and the Lou Sartor Heart for the Community award. Sam Pack Auto Group won Time Magazine's Quality Dealer of the Year in 1998 and was inducted into the Ford Motor Company's Hall of Fame. In 2023, Sam earned an honorary doctorate's degree from Tarleton State University, and it has established the Dr. Sam Pack College of Business in his honor.

In addition to his professional career, Sam is involved with the Holy Angels nonprofit organization in Shreveport, Louisiana, to assist individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For over 67 years, he has been married to his wonderful wife Carol. They have two sons, Tony and Todd, and two grandchildren, Carly and Macy. A devoted man of faith, Sam attends the Good Shepherd Epis-

copal Church in Dallas. I am proud of the work Sam has accomplished, and I wish him continued success for many years to come.

It is an honor to bestow Sam with the Patriot Award for his exceptional service to the people of North Texas.

IN MEMORY OF DR. SHELIA ROSS

HON. JERRY L. CARL

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Mr. CARL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and remember a dear friend, Dr. Shelia Ross who passed away on September 13 after a hard-fought battle of cancer. As the Director of The University of South Alabama Health Stroke Program, Dr. Ross was focused on working with other health officials and community members on advocating for brain health and stroke care. She used every opportunity to educate the residents of Mobile about the functions of the brain, in specific relation to strokes. I am honored to have had such a courageous individual and friend residing in and helping the people of the First District of Alabama, and we will miss her greatly.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ADRIANO ESPAILLAT

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, due to an unforeseen matter, I was not present for one vote on Tuesday, September 17, 2024 and one vote on Tuesday, September 10, 2024. Had I been present, I would have voted: NAY on Roll Call No. 403, and YEA on Roll Call No. 419.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF NICK F. KASTRANTAS DURING WORLD WAR II

HON. HALEY M. STEVENS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to recognize the honorable life of Sergeant Nicholas F. Kastrantas, a distinguished veteran, father, and artist. Mr. Kastrantas, in his military service, creative endeavors, and personal life displayed intelligence, dedication, and a commitment to fighting on behalf of the greater good.

Mr. Kastrantas was born in Pennsylvania and grew up in Greece, where he joined the Greek army and mastered the art of cartography. He returned to the U.S. in 1939 and immediately enlisted to serve his country. He was personally selected by Lieutenant Colonel James Gavin to contribute his artistic and linguistic abilities to the 505th Parachute Infantry. Mr. Kastrantas was a skilled mapmaker and spoke five languages fluently, allowing him to be an incredible asset to the 82nd Airborne Division during World War II.

Affectionately nicknamed "The Greek," he used his skills to map drop points at Nor-

mandy and completed four combat jumps in Normandy, Sicily, Salerno, and Holland as a paratrooper. His intelligence and abilities were invaluable, enabling him to create a 3-dimensional sand table map for his unit's mission on D-Day. Nick also fought in the Battle of the Bulge and earned six bronze stars, the Combat Infantryman Badge, and the Parachutist Badge through his heroic service.

Mr. Kastrantas settled down in Detroit, MI after the war and made a name for himself as a commercial artist. He lived a long life and left us on August 31, 2011. His legacy lives on through his daughter, Ann, and in his murals that can be found in restaurants around Michigan.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honored to recognize the life and service of Private Nicholas F. Kastrantas—a man who used his creativity and dedication to serve his country in his hour of need. Please join me in celebrating his wondrous life.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PRAMILA JAYAPAL

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I missed Roll Call votes 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, and 417 on September 9, 2024, September 10, 2024, September 11, 2024, and September 12, 2024 due to illness. Had I been present, my votes would have been as follows: Nay on Roll Call No. 401; Nay on Roll Call No. 402; Nay on Roll Call No. 403; Nay on Roll Call No. 404; Yea on Roll Call No. 405; Nay on Roll Call No. 406; Yea on Roll Call No. 407; Nay on Roll Call No. 408; Yea on Roll Call No. 409; Yea on Roll Call No. 410; Nay on Roll Call No. 411; Yea on Roll Call No. 412; Nay on Roll Call No. 413; Yea on Roll Call No. 414; Nay on Roll Call No. 415; Yea on Roll Call No. 416; and Nay on Roll Call No. 417.

RECOGNIZING THE BILBY FAMILY

HON. JAMES COMER

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Bilby Family of Franklin County who has received the 2024 Angels in Adoption Award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

Each year, CCAI selects individuals across the country who are committed to improving the lives of children in need of loving homes.

The Bilby Family started their journey in 2017 and immediately recognized the need for foster parents in Kentucky. In 2019, 2-year-old James came into the family's life. Since adopting James, the Bilby Family has grown closer, and James has become an integral part of their family. Their story can serve as a blueprint for others who seek to open their homes and hearts to children in need of a forever family.

The entire 1st Congressional District of Kentucky should be proud of the Bilby Family.