

Prior to moving back to Plains from the Governor's residence, Governor Carter had already announced his intention to run for President of the United States in the 1976 election. In November of 1976, Jimmy Carter became President-elect of the United States and the first Georgian to win the highest office in the land. As President, Jimmy Carter showed great success in international affairs, delivering the Camp David Accords, Panama Canal treaties, SALT II treaty, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. He also delivered on his domestic agenda, signing legislation to establish the U.S. Department of Education, expanding the Head Start program, successfully making America less dependent on foreign energy, and protecting millions of acres of public lands for future generations.

Following President Carter's loss in the 1980 Presidential Election, the Carter family returned to home to Plains where they continued to make a positive impact on both their local community and the world. Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter continued their ministry of service after their time in the White House with the same vigor and urgency, becoming heavily involved in Habitat for Humanity. The Carters' work with Habitat drew national attention through the annual Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project, which helped the upstart non-profit organization grow and construct thousands of new homes for low and middle-income families. In 1982, Jimmy and Rosalynn founded the Carter Center, a nonprofit human rights organization, which has since become famous for its work to eradicate disease, strengthen democracies, and alleviate human suffering all around the world.

In 1999, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter were jointly awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor by President Bill Clinton. And in 2002, President Carter was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development.

Together, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter rose to great heights, supporting and cherishing one another along the way as they served the world around them. From the Plains Peanut Festival to the Governor's Mansion, to the White House, and to communities around the globe, they always remained grounded, and Plains remained home in their hearts.

Mr. Speaker. I ask my colleagues to join my wife, Vivian and me, along with the more than 765,000 people of the Second Congressional District, in celebrating the amazing accomplishments of Jimmy Carter and commemorating his 100th year on this earth.

RECOGNIZING CAPTAIN ROBERT NOLEN ROCHELL, USA, RETIRED, WITH A CONGRESSIONAL VETERAN COMMENDATION

### HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 25, 2024*

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor retired USA Captain Robert Nolen Rochell, of Woodway, Texas, by presenting him with a Congressional Veteran Commenda-

tion. His unwavering commitment to his fellow man in some of the darkest days of human history make him inexplicably worthy of our respect, admiration, and thanks.

Born in Marlin, Texas, Robert "Bob" N. Rochell made the courageous decision to leave high school at the age of 17 to enlist in the United States Army during World War II. Stationed at Dachau, Germany—site of profound historical significance as a former Nazi concentration camp—he served with distinction as a World War II veteran.

Bob's commitment to service extended beyond World War II. As the Vietnam War loomed and the need for Field Artillery Officers grew, he applied to and was accepted into the United States Field Artillery Officer Candidate School, graduating 13th out of 125 in Class 8-65. He further demonstrated his dedication by attending Airborne School and serving a brief assignment at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Six months later, he began his first tour in Vietnam as a forward observer and air observer in the Central Highlands. Near the end of this tour, he served as Executive Officer of the 155mm howitzer battery airlifted into combat—Battery A, 1st Battalion, 20th Field Artillery—which became the second most decorated Artillery Battalion of the Vietnam War. After returning from his first tour, Bob was assigned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, as an instructor at the Officer Candidate School. He was subsequently called back for a second tour in Vietnam, where he served as Commanding Officer of Service, Headquarters, and Alpha Batteries. Captain Rochell retired from active duty on September 1, 1975.

His distinguished military career is reflected in the numerous decorations he received: the Bronze Star with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Air Medal, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, the Good Conduct Medal with Clasp (Bronze, four loops), the Army Occupation Medal (Germany), the National Defense Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Vietnam Service Medal with one Silver Star and one Bronze Star, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal, the Meritorious Unit Citation, the Meritorious Service Medal, and the Parachutist Badge.

Captain Rochell's dedication to service continued long after his military career. He served as the national president of the Society of the Fifth Infantry Division and as president of the Heart of Texas Chapter of The Retired Officers Association (TROA), a predecessor of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). He is a life member of the 1st Battalion, 30th Field Artillery Association (Hard Chargers), where he served on the board as First Vice President. Additionally, he is an active member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Fifth Division Association, the U.S. Field Artillery Association, and the Disabled American Veterans.

Robert was married to the late Elizabeth Leggett for over 40 years, sharing a life grounded in mutual support and community service. Today, he remains an active member of his community and continues to contribute to the Heart of Texas Military Officers Association of America.

It is my honor to award retired USA Captain Robert Nolen Rochell a Congressional Veteran Commendation. His lifelong commitment to his country and community exemplifies the highest standards of service and sacrifice.

RECOGNIZING OLYMPIAN AARON CUMMINGS

### HON. HILLARY J. SCHOLTEN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 25, 2024*

Ms. SCHOLTEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my constituent, Mr. Aaron Cummings, for his outstanding performance at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Originally from Muskegon, Aaron represented West Michigan on the world stage as an athlete on the U.S. Men's Rugby Sevens Team. Aaron has dedicated his time and energy to becoming one of the foremost rugby players in our country.

Growing up in West Michigan, Aaron began his rugby career at Grand Haven High School. He then attended Davenport University in Kent County, Michigan, and helped the Davenport Panthers finish fourth in the 2016 and 2017 USA College Sevens National Championship. Kicking off his professional rugby career, Aaron won the 2021 Club Sevens National Championship with the Chicago Lions and joined the USA Men's Sevens Residency in Chula Vista. In early 2022, he entered the world stage at the HSBC World Rugby Sevens Debut in Malaga, Spain, and was later named to the Rugby World Cup Sevens 2022 squad in Cape Town, South Africa.

This year, Aaron joined the 2024 U.S. Men's Rugby Sevens Team at the Paris Olympics, where he and his teammates finished eighth.

Mr. Speaker, once more I ask my colleagues to join me in commending Mr. Aaron Cummings for his commitment to sportsmanship, his tenacity, and his athleticism. I congratulate Mr. Cummings and thank him for being such a wonderful representative of West Michigan.

REMEMBERING SUSAN ASHNER

### HON. ANDREW R. GARBARINO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 25, 2024*

Mr. GARBARINO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and remember a dear friend, Susan Ashner, who recently passed away. As the founder and board chair of Beit Ruth, Susan worked tirelessly to create a safe haven for at-risk girls in Israel and break the cycle of generational violence. Susan's compassion and unwavering dedication touched so many lives and had an immeasurable positive impact on each girl she worked with. Her unparalleled legacy of kindness and leadership lives on through her husband, Michael, their children Samuel, Jessica, Julia, and Leo, and their loving family. I am honored to have counted such an extraordinary person as a friend.

HONORING MAYOR WILLIAM A. BLONIGAN

### HON. ILHAN OMAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 25, 2024*

Ms. OMAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mayor William A. Blonigan, who will

be retiring after an impressive 44-year tenure with the City of Robbinsdale. I wish to acknowledge his tireless efforts in the expansion of housing opportunities, his commitment to the public good, his stewardship of critical infrastructure initiatives, and his overall devotion to the city he serves.

Mayor Blonigan's service to Robbinsdale began in 1980, when he was first elected to the City Council. As his city manager wrote, "He has not left the dais since." After 10 consecutive terms as a City Council member, he ran to serve as the city's Mayor, winning the support of his constituents through active communication, strong relationships, and a desire to find common ground on the issues that impact Robbinsdale residents.

Over the last 44 years, Mayor Blonigan has been a steady hand in some of the most consequential initiatives in the city's history. He helped build new facilities for the Police Department and Fire Department in 1993 to ensure residents received a high quality of service from their public safety agencies. He drove historic investment in parks throughout the city, including the redevelopment of Robbinsdale's largest park, Lakeview Terrace Park, that included a playground, ball fields, walking paths, and access to Crystal Lake. He supported a new water filtration system for Crystal Lake that resulted in over 40,000 pounds of litter and pollution being removed. Most recently, he oversaw the construction of a new water treatment plant that went online in 2023 and a new water tower that went into service earlier this year. He prioritized an aggressive approach to caring for the city's 100+ year old infrastructure while ensuring residents were not overburdened by property taxes.

Mayor Blonigan's tenure is also defined by significant expansion of housing opportunities and successful economic development initiatives. He built strong relationships with intergovernmental committees, private entities, small businesses, and developers to drive this important work. During his time as Mayor, Robbinsdale saw multiple unused schools and dilapidated buildings redeveloped into housing, as well as the construction of multiple new market-rate apartment complexes and hundreds of new single-family homes supported by the city's Economic Development Authority. He encouraged an expansion of North Memorial Hospital—one of the largest hospitals in the state—and a full-service grocery store down the street from it. He coordinated investment in Robbinsdale's historic downtown, ensuring it is vibrant for future generations.

At the heart of Mayor Blonigan's service is his unwavering commitment to the public good. In 2011, the City created a Domestic Partner Registry to recognize same-sex partnerships in advance of statewide marriage legalization in 2012. He was a supporter of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives long before they became common practice in municipal governments. He led nearby cities in creating a process to remove racial covenants from their land and home titles to help us heal from generations of racist redlining. He joined cities across the state in declaring a climate emergency, leading to the creation of Robbinsdale's Energy Action Plan to help the city and its residents fight the climate crisis.

Mr. Speaker, it is my great privilege to honor and thank Mayor Blonigan for his service to the City of Robbinsdale. His leadership should be an example to all public servants.

## RECOGNIZING ABBY JOHNSON

### HON. LISA C. McCLAIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

Mrs. McCLAIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Abby Johnson, who was named a 2024 She Leads Woman of Distinction.

Abby Johnson is a strong advocate for life from the womb to the tomb and beyond. She went to work for Planned Parenthood believing she would be helping women. After working her way up from volunteer to director of one of their facilities, and even winning Planned Parenthood's employee of the year award, Abby had a surprising change of heart after witnessing a live ultrasound guided abortion procedure. It became clear in that moment that abortion did not provide the freedom she had promised so many women in those counseling rooms. Abortion only caused harm, destruction and devastation. Upon that realization, Abby left her job in the abortion industry and has been sharing her experiences ever since.

Her story was chronicled in a best-selling book titled, "Unplanned," which was later turned into a major motion picture with the same name. She has written several other books, including "The Walls Are Still Talking" and "Fierce Mercy."

Abby is the CEO of two successful pro-life non-profits and hosts her own podcast, "Politely Rude." One of her ministries, "And Then There Were None," has helped almost 700 abortion workers leave the abortion industry and come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating this outstanding woman of distinction.

## HONORING ELIZABETH BROWNE

### HON. KATHERINE M. CLARK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Elizabeth Browne for her dedicated service to the health and wellbeing of her neighbors in and around Waltham, Massachusetts.

Ms. Browne has been a pillar of our community. She began working with Charles River Community Health in 2003 and has spent the past fifteen years serving as its Executive Director and CEO.

For over two decades, she has devoted her time, talents, and energy to the staff and patients of Charles River Community Health.

Founded in 1974, Charles River Community Health is a vital resource to the people of Allston-Brighton, Waltham, and surrounding areas. They are focused on delivering comprehensive, integrated, and equitable primary health care for a diverse group of individuals and families.

Under her leadership, Charles River Community Health expanded its physical space, grew its dedicated staff, and strengthened its capacity to deliver high-quality service to more patients—ensuring continuity of care at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Browne has dedicated her life to community-based care and has worked diligently to increase access and improve health outcomes for families in Waltham and across the Commonwealth.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to Liz for her career of service to the Commonwealth and wish her the best in her next chapter.

## RECOGNIZING SENIOR CHIEF PETTY OFFICER WALTER MILLER LAVENDER, USN, RETIRED, WITH A CONGRESSIONAL VETERAN COMMENDATION

### HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor retired USN Senior Chief Petty Officer Walter Miller Lavender, of Lorena, Texas, by presenting him with a Congressional Veteran Commendation. His remarkable accomplishments reflect a life dedicated not only to the greater good but also to his community and his country, exemplifying the values that define true patriotism.

Walter began his journey at Cisco Junior College on a football scholarship and gained recognition as an award-winning boxer. He later transferred to Midwestern State University but chose in 1961 to enlist in the United States Navy, answering a higher call to serve.

Trained as a medic, he was first stationed in Guam, where he honed his medical skills and survived the devastating Super Typhoon Karen in 1962. His resilience and commitment were further demonstrated during two tours in Vietnam. In 1965, as a Combat Medic with the 7th Marines near Quy Nhon, he provided critical care to wounded soldiers under fire. In 1970, aboard the helicopter carrier USS *Iwo Jima*, he was responsible for evacuating casualties, ensuring that injured service members received timely medical attention.

Walter also served aboard the USS *Dewey* and the USS *Ward*, showcasing versatility and leadership across multiple assignments. After over 22 years of distinguished service, he retired in 1983 as a Senior Chief Hospital Corpsman from the Marine Corps Reserve in Waco, Texas.

His exemplary service is reflected in the numerous decorations he received: the Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Unit Commendation, five Good Conduct Awards, the National Defense Service Medal, the Republic of Vietnam Service Medal with two Bronze Stars, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device, the Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation Gallantry Cross, and the Seventh Fleet "Shell Back" Recognition aboard the USS *Dewey*.

Following his military career, Walter continued to serve his community as a Radiologic Technologist in local hospitals until his retirement in 2014. He also served as a Municipal Court Judge in the 1980s, demonstrating his ongoing commitment to public service.

Today, he remains actively involved as the treasurer of the Heart of Texas Vietnam Veterans Association Chapter 1012 and serves as a health and wellness advisor and PTSD mentor at the Waco Veterans One-Stop and the Heart of Texas Behavioral Health Network.