

Longevity Service Ribbon with three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Small Arms Expert Marksman Ribbon (Pistol), and the Air Force Training Ribbon. These honors reflect his dedication, skill, and the high esteem in which he is held by his peers and superiors.

Following his distinguished military career, Lieutenant Colonel Rafuse has been deeply involved in community service and education. He co-founded the Baylor University School of Engineering and Computer Science and has served on its Board of Advocates for over 25 years, influencing the education of countless students. He has also been a member of the Baylor University Air Institute's Board of Advisors for over five years, contributing his expertise to the advancement of aviation education.

Currently, he chairs the Board of Texas State Technical College, where he has served for over 25 years, demonstrating his long-term commitment to technical education and workforce development. Additionally, he is a member and former president of the Heart of Texas Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America, where he has served on the educational scholarship selection committee for over 25 years, supporting the next generation of leaders. These are just a few examples of the many organizations where Lieutenant Colonel Rafuse has made significant contributions as a member and leader.

It is with great honor and respect that I present retired USAF Lieutenant Colonel Harold Eugene Rafuse with a Congressional Veteran Commendation from the 17th Congressional District of Texas. His exemplary service to our Nation and continued contributions to his community stand as an inspiration to us all.

INTRODUCTION OF THE SAN PABLO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE EXPANSION ACT

HON. JOHN GARAMENDI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce the "San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act." I thank U.S. Senator ALEX PADILLA (D-CA) for sponsoring the companion legislation and my colleagues, Congressmen JARED HUFFMAN (D-CA) and MIKE THOMPSON (D-CA) for cosponsoring my bill.

The San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge is one of California's treasured places, protecting more than 24,390 acres of tidal marshes and wetlands in the north San Francisco Bay Area. As part of the Pacific Flyway, the National Wildlife Refuge provides critical habitat for endangered species and migratory birds.

The "San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act" would add approximately 5,658 acres of adjacent baylands owned by the State of California and the nonprofit Sonoma Land Trust to the National Wildlife Refuge's boundary. This expansion would increase the National Wildlife Refuge's acreage by more than 23 percent, supporting President Biden's "America the Beautiful" National Conservation Goal to protect and conserve at least 30 percent of the lands and waters in the United States by 2030 and Governor Newsom's similar conservation goal for the State of California.

Conserving California's special places has been a lifelong passion throughout my tenure in the State Legislature, as Deputy Secretary of the Interior to President Clinton, and now as a Member of Congress representing Solano County. San Pablo Bay is one of those special places. This bill will help to restore the saltmarshes in San Pablo Bay for future generations and increase outdoor recreation opportunities for Bay Area residents and visitors alike.

Importantly, this bill does not infringe upon state interests or individual property owners and prevents the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from using eminent domain to acquire properties within the expanded boundaries. Instead, the bill directs the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to only acquire land within the newly extended boundary from willing sale or donation. Furthermore, the bill encourages the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to engage in cooperative management with state agencies to better manage the National Wildlife Refuge and nearby state conservation lands within the San Pablo Bay watershed.

This bill is inspired by the tireless efforts of the late U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and the late Congressman Don Edwards (D-CA) to restore and conserve the Bay Area's saltmarshes and wetlands. Thanks to their leadership and steadfast work, the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge in the South Bay now encompasses over 30,000 acres of habitat for millions of migratory birds and endangered species. It is an honor to continue Senator Feinstein and Congressman Edwards' legacy of protecting and restoring resilient bayland ecosystems that benefit both wildlife, people, and our planet.

The "San Pablo National Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act" takes a critical step toward preserving the Bay Area's ecological diversity and ensuring the resilience of our communities as we continue fighting the climate crisis. I thank the hundreds of Bay Area residents and Californians who participated in the public comment period on my draft bill announced in September 2023. Their thoughtful comments and overwhelming support made this a stronger bill.

My colleagues and I are honored to introduce this bill to help restore vital ecosystems and improve the north Bay's climate resiliency by preserving one of California's special places for future generations. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members to join us in cosponsoring this bill.

RECOGNIZING CHANDRA CHEESEBOROUGH

HON. LISA C. McCLAIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

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

Chandra Cheeseborough is an example of a world record breaking Olympic Champion with a successful coaching career after receiving one of the first ever Title IX scholarships given to deserving female athletes.

Chandra broke onto the international track scene at age 16, winning two gold medals at

the 1975 Pan American Games, taking the 200 meters in an American record time of 22.77 seconds. In 1976, she set the World junior record at 11.13 seconds, placing second at the U.S. Olympic trials, then placing sixth in that event at the Montreal Olympic games.

Chandra graduated from Jean Ribault High School in Jacksonville, Florida in 1977, where she set the still standing NFHS national high school records in both the 100-yard and 220-yard dashes. She attended Tennessee State, where she was a member of national championship teams that set world indoor records. She qualified for the 1980 U.S. Olympic team but was unable to compete due to the Summer Olympics boycott. She won the national indoor 200-yard dash in 1979, 1981, 1982 and 1983.

Chandra's breakthrough year in the 400-meter race came in 1984, when she set two American records in the event, then placing second in the Los Angeles Olympics in a career best of 49.05, the No. 10 performer of all time. She made history at the 1984 games when she became the first woman to win gold medals in both relays, which were held less than an hour apart.

In 1999 she was named head coach of both men and women's track and cross-country teams leading her Tigerbells to 6 Ohio Valley Conference Championships. She also served as assistant coach for the 2008 Beijing Olympics hurdles and sprints.

Her faith in Christ has been a beacon of hope and strength to her student athletes.

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

RECOGNIZING THE CAREER AND LEGACY OF JUDGE SARA J. SMOLENSKI

HON. HILLARY J. SCHOLTEN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

Ms. SCHOLTEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the career of my constituent, the Honorable Sara J. Smolenski, who is retiring from the Kent County 63rd District Court after 34 years of outstanding public service. As a trailblazer in our West Michigan community, Judge Smolenski has dedicated her professional life to serving the people of Kent County.

Judge Smolenski served as a private attorney and an assistant city attorney in Grand Rapids prior to her judgeship. She was first elected to the court in 1990 and served as Chief Justice for over a quarter century, from 1996 to 2023. Throughout her life, she has supported local organizations such as the Hospice of Michigan, Kent County Literacy Council, RAVE (Resources Against Violent Encounters) to Women of West Michigan, and the Young Women's Christian Association. Her incredible service to our community has not gone unnoticed, receiving awards from organizations such as the American Red Cross and Women Lawyers Association of Michigan.

In 2016, Judge Smolenski became the first elected official to enter a same-sex marriage in Kent County when she married her partner of 27 years. She remains a role model for women and LGBTQ+ people in Michigan's

Third District, and I am honored to celebrate her today.

Mr. Speaker, once more I ask my colleagues to join me in commending Judge Sara J. Smolenski for her commitment to public service, justice, and the people of Kent County. I hope her retirement is restful and filled with joy.

CONGRATULATING MAJOR GENERAL KENNETH S. HARA ON HIS SERVICE AND RETIREMENT

HON. JILL N. TOKUDA

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

Ms. TOKUDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Major General Kenneth S. Hara, the Adjutant General of the State of Hawaii, on his retirement from the Hawaii National Guard after a celebrated 40 years of service to our state and our nation.

As Hawaii's adjutant general, Major General Hara serves as commander of the Hawaii National Guard and the director of the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency. In those roles, he has led the state's response to some of the most challenging and complex emergencies in Hawaii's history. In March 2020, just a few months after Major General Hara became the adjutant general, Governor Josh Green asked him to serve as the state's incident commander for the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to his leadership, Hawaii's response to the pandemic was among the most successful in the country.

Over the course of his career, Major General Hara also served as the dual status commander of Joint Task Force-50 in response to the Kilauea eruption and Hurricane Lane in 2018 and as commander of Task Force KOA after the 2006 Hawaii Island earthquake. And as a First Lieutenant over thirty years ago, he played a key role in supporting the state's response to Hurricane Iniki in 1992.

But what I will most remember Major General Hara for is his role in leading the state's response to the August 2023 wildfires on Maui and supporting their recovery. As the freshman representative for Hawaii's Second Congressional District that spans all eight of our islands, I am grateful to Major General Hara for his work in coordinating the state's response to this unprecedented disaster in our state's history alongside our local and federal partners.

Throughout his career in the National Guard, Major General Hara deployed three times. In 2005, he deployed to Baghdad, Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as commander of the 299th Infantry's 2nd Battalion. In 2008, he deployed to Kuwait as deputy commander of the 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Then, in 2012, this time as commander of the 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, he deployed to Kandahar in Afghanistan.

His many awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with one Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, the Meritorious Service Medal with three Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Aviator Badge, and the Combat Infantryman Badge.

Major General Hara's career continued a legacy of service that began with his late fa-

ther, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Hara. Alongside his three brothers, Major General Hara has ensured that the Hara name is synonymous with service to our state and the nation.

This career dedicated to service has also been a family commitment, and I would be remiss if I did not also thank Major General Hara's wife Myoung and his children Kristin, Julia, Nichole, Justin, and Alicia. Their support and sacrifice made his success possible for all of us.

As he and his entire family transition to a new chapter, I proudly join them in celebrating a tremendous career that will continue to inspire and motivate future generations of leaders. But even more importantly, I wish them all the best in enjoying a well-earned retirement.

Mahalo to Ken for all that he has done and given to Hawaii and our country.

RECOGNIZING STAFF SERGEANT DONALD LYNN McDONALD, USMC, 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 USMC Staff Sergeant Donald Lynn McDonald of Groesbeck, Texas, by presenting him with a Congressional Veteran Commendation. His dedication to veteran's causes in retirement reflects the ideals of our Country's core values.

Born in Mexia, Texas, Donald McDonald answered the call to serve by joining the United States Marine Corps in the 1970s. Over more than six years of active duty, he demonstrated exceptional commitment and skill. Serving as an Electric Systems Technician, he began his active service in 1971 in Beaufort, South Carolina. His exemplary performance earned him the M-14 Marksman Classification, the National Defense Service Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, and a Letter of Appreciation, highlighting his professionalism and dedication to duty.

Upon his honorable discharge, Staff Sergeant McDonald continued his legacy of service within Limestone County. He became an active member of the Limestone County History Committee, where he focused on locating individuals in cemeteries and assisting families in finding their lost relatives. His efforts have provided closure and solace to many families, underscoring his compassion and commitment to his community.

Currently, he serves as the Limestone County Veteran Service Officer. In this role, he has achieved accreditation and has been instrumental in assisting numerous veterans throughout the community. His tireless work ensures that veterans and their families receive the benefits and support they have rightfully earned. Donald's unwavering dedication reflects a deep respect for the sacrifices of his fellow service members and a genuine desire to enhance their quality of life.

This nomination is not only a tribute to Donald's profound commitment to his fellow citizens but also a recognition of the entire Veterans of Foreign Wars community in Limestone County. His selfless dedication em-

bodies the highest ideals of service and citizenship.

I am honored to award retired USMC Staff Sergeant Donald Lynn McDonald with a Congressional Veteran Commendation.

CELEBRATING RIDGWAY, PA BICENTENNIAL YEAR

HON. GLENN THOMPSON

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Ridgway, Pennsylvania's Bicentennial year.

In 1817, Philadelphia shipping merchant Jacob Ridgway purchased 120,000 acres of land in Northwest Pennsylvania.

Forty thousand of these acres would officially become Elk County on April 18, 1843 with Ridgway as the county seat.

According to historians, the town of Ridgway was established in 1824 when one of Mr. Ridgway's nephews, James Gillis, convinced Ridgway that his land, which was filled with an abundance of lumber, could become a lucrative business opportunity.

In the past two hundred years, Ridgway has evolved into a thriving community where the lumber industry continues to flourish.

Ridgway is home to the Ridgway Chainsaw Carving Rendezvous.

What began as a shared passion of family and friends enthusiastic about wood carving has grown into the largest chainsaw carving gathering of its kind, attracting visitors from across the globe.

Mr. Speaker, Ridgway, PA, is home to a vibrant community, and I hope you will join me in wishing Ridgway a happy 200th-year celebration.

RECOGNIZING PAMELA EVETTE

HON. LISA C. McCLAIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

Mrs. McCLAIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to Lt. Governor Pamela Evette, who was named a 2024 She Leads Woman of Distinction.

Pamela Evette, the 93rd Lieutenant Governor, and the first female Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina, demonstrates God's love for families and children. She has worked to support early childhood education, school reading programs, school choice, and South Carolina non-profits. Pamela is also a staunch supporter of parental rights, the military, and law enforcement knowing the importance of a safe environment for the future of our country and the next generation.

An entrepreneur and businesswoman, Pamela has received numerous accolades, including the ATHENA Leadership Award and the Enterprising Woman of the Year Award. Since taking office in 2019, Pamela has been laser-focused on utilizing her professional background to highlight South Carolina's thriving small business ecosystem, attract new business to the state, and promote innovative public-private partnerships. To help highlight and protect South Carolina's natural resources,