

Jessica Long of Baltimore, who won a gold medal in the women's 400m freestyle swim, making her one of the top Paralympians of all times with 29 medals.

Zachary Shattuck of Mt. Airy, who won a silver medal in men's mixed 4x50m freestyle relay swim.

On behalf of all Marylanders, I thank them for representing Maryland in the 2024 Olympics and Paralympics and congratulate them on this major achievement.

#### TRIBUTE TO GEORGE NEE

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise today to congratulate George Nee, president of the AFL-CIO of Rhode Island, on his upcoming retirement and to thank him for his years of service and unwavering dedication to improving the lives of working people.

For George, organized labor serves as the "People's Lobbyist," ensuring that the concerns of working people are given due consideration when critical decisions are made. In his retirement letter, he wrote that "organized labor has a right and a responsibility to exercise our voice when and where decisions are made at every level of government. These decisions impact the quality of life and economy of our state, and we must be there."

His leadership—tenacious but pragmatic and always with decency and integrity—has contributed to the vibrancy of the union movement in Rhode Island, making it one of the States with the highest percentage of union workers in the Nation.

From the beginning, George acted on the belief that working people have a right to have a voice, no matter if they are working in the fields, on the factory floors, in offices, in healthcare facilities, in schools, or on construction sites.

As a young man, he left the comfort of Boston College to earn \$5 dollars per week, plus room and board, to join farmworkers in organizing successful grape and lettuce boycotts. He was inspired by Cesar Chavez, and joined him on a pilgrimage across the farmlands of California, serving as his personal bodyguard.

Rhode Island called him back. In 1976, he organized jewelry workers, clerical workers, and healthcare workers and founded SEIU Local 76, where he served as president until he joined the Rhode Island AFL-CIO in 1983 as a staff representative. George quickly rose through the ranks at the Rhode Island AFL-CIO. By 1985, he was elected secretary-treasurer and, in 2009, president—a role that he will step down from on October 11.

George's strong moral compass and steady leadership has been a beacon for public servants and community leaders across the State. He has been a mentor and a trusted adviser to me and to so many others who share his goals of a just and prosperous Nation where workers' rights are always protected.

In a 2018 interview with Rhode Island Public Radio's Scott MacKay, George

said: "We have a solemn obligation to the people who came before us to fight back and protect these rights for future generations."

As he begins his next chapter, George can rest assured that he fulfilled that solemn promise and has equipped a new generation for the battles and the challenges ahead. Rhode Island is a stronger State, and we are a better Nation because of George Nee's leadership.

I thank him and his wonderful family, especially his beloved wife Ann, for their great friendship and kindness over many years and for their great inspiration. George always reminded us, by his actions, that hard work for a just cause was the greatest and most satisfying contribution that we can make.

I wish George a happy and healthy retirement. He has earned it.

#### TRIBUTE TO GEORGE NEE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I rise today to offer my sincerest congratulations to my friend George Nee on his upcoming retirement as president of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO. George is a friend of many years, and I have long admired his dedication to fighting for Rhode Islanders—for good-paying jobs, affordable healthcare, safe workplaces, and retirement security.

George was born in Syracuse, NY, and first came to New England in the late 1960s to attend Boston College. He left his studies to oversee the United Farm Workers grape boycott in Massachusetts and, a few years later, came to Rhode Island for the Farm Workers' lettuce boycott. Through his work, he met legendary activist and organizer Cesar Chavez and became part of the security team protecting Chavez as he worked to organize farm workers. Inspired by Chavez, George returned to the Ocean State in 1976 to form his own union, which would become the Service Employees International Union Local 76, representing jewelry, clerical, and healthcare workers.

In 1983, George joined the Rhode Island AFL-CIO as its executive director, then secretary-treasurer, then president. Under George's leadership, the AFL-CIO improved access to opportunities for workers, including Climate Jobs Rhode Island, an initiative to help transition Rhode Island toward a clean energy economy. Along the way, he met and married Anne Sliney, the best of a great many good decisions he has made. She has made her own magnificent contributions, and together, they raised three children Katie, Brigid, and Patrick, who are each following the family tradition of making a difference in ways that matter.

I got to know George best in the early 90s when Rhode Island's workers' compensation system was in crisis. George brought the union voice and perspective to the table and advocated for reforms to revamp the broken system. The result was a law that dra-

matically reduced costs without cutting benefits—a win for workers and employers. George was one of the keys to the law's passage and went on to protect that reform and the workers' compensation system over many years. George stands in a Rhode Island tradition of leadership in the national labor movement, along with legends like Ed McElroy, Armand Sabitoni, Frank Montanaro, and now Michael Sabitoni. George puts his head down and works hard, so workers in our State can hold their heads high.

Bravo, my friend. We owe you a debt of gratitude and appreciation for uplifting the lives and livelihoods of workers across our State. My very best wishes on your exciting next chapter.

#### REMEMBERING J. MICHAEL DOWNEY

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise today to honor the life of one of Rhode Island's great champions for working people, J. Michael Downey, president of Rhode Island Council 94 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees.

Mike was known as a family man, an organizer, a tough negotiator, and a fierce protector of his members' wages, working conditions, and benefits. He was a loving husband to his wife of nearly 50 years, Claudette, a devoted father to his three children, and a dotting grandfather to his nine grandchildren. He was also a beloved brother to his brothers and sisters in the union movement.

Mike came from a family of union organizers. His father was the president of Local 28, the Plumber's Union and executive director of the Allied Building Trades. His grandfather was president of the Bricklayer's Union, Local 1. Mike was a master plumber and practiced his trade at the University of Rhode Island for 27 years, during which he also served as the president of Local 528.

He later brought his expertise to the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, where he served as the chief plumbing investigator. In 2005, Mike was first elected president of Council 94, and he was re-elected five times. He also served on the executive board of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO and the Institute of Labor Studies. Under his leadership, Council 94 increased member participation, expanded and enhanced its political activities, and prioritized organizing, adding new locals.

Just days before his passing, Mike helped negotiate a new 3-year contract with the State that boosted wages and enhanced benefits. The contract was overwhelmingly approved by the rank-and-file members—a final addition to his long list of accomplishments as a union leader.

Mike was known for his kindness and compassion. He is remembered for his

special passion for supporting the lowest paid members of the union. He believed in the dignity of work and creating pathways for all workers to advance. He embodied the spirit of solidarity.

We will miss him and will strive to live by his example.

#### REMEMBERING J. MICHAEL DOWNEY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I rise today to honor my friend, J. Michael Downey, who was the president of Rhode Island's AFSCME Council 94. Mike passed away in August, leaving behind his wife Claudette, their three children Corey, Faith, and Michael, and their spouses. He also leaves behind two siblings and nine grandchildren. Mike was born in Providence and grew up in a union household. Both his father and grandfather served in leadership roles in their local unions.

After graduating from LaSalle Academy, Mike earned his master plumbing license through a 5-year apprenticeship program. Mike went on to work as a plumber at the University of Rhode Island and later as chief plumbing investigator at the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training. It was during Mike's time at URI that, like his father and grandfather before him, he found his passion for organized labor and advocating for the rights and well-being of workers. For more than 27 years, Mike served as president of Local 528, which represents workers at URI. Mike also served as president of AFSCME Council 94 from 2005 until his passing.

Mike was an avid sports fan and loved New England's teams—the Celtics, Red Sox, and Patriots. He also enjoyed coaching youth sports and could often be found cheering in the stands at his grandkids' sporting events. Mike was a great guy, an enthusiastic leader, and a good friend in the fight. I thank him for his tireless advocacy on behalf of workers across Rhode Island. I will miss him.

#### TRIBUTE TO J. WILLIAM MIDDENDORF II

Mr. REED. Madam President, today I rise to recognize the 100th birthday of Ambassador J. William Middendorf. Ambassador Middendorf is an extraordinary Rhode Islander and an extraordinary American. Last Sunday, we had a chance to celebrate his birthday at his home in Little Compton, RI, and he was as sharp and insightful as ever. Today, along with Senator WHITEHOUSE, I would like to take a moment to honor his impressive career in service to our country.

Ambassador Middendorf, now a resident of Little Compton, RI, was born in Baltimore, MD on September 22, 1924. As a young man, he attended the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA. In 1945, as World War II raged in Europe, Ambassador Middendorf inter-

rupted his education to serve in the Navy as an engineering officer and navigator aboard the landing craft support ship USS *LCS-53*. After the war, Ambassador Middendorf continued his education and graduated from Holy Cross with a bachelor of naval science. He later attended Harvard College, where he graduated with a bachelor of arts degree, and in 1954, he earned an M.B.A. from New York University's Stern School of Business.

Ambassador Middendorf then became an investment banker. Eventually, as a cofounder of the prominent Wall Street firm Middendorf, Colgate and Company, he began to involve himself in politics. He took on important roles within the national Republican Party, including as treasurer of the Republican National Committee from 1965 to 1969.

Eventually, Ambassador Middendorf left his investment firm and began his long career in public service. In 1969, President Nixon appointed him to be U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands, where he represented our Nation with distinction. In 1974, he returned to the U.S. to serve first as Under Secretary of the Navy, and then as the 62nd Secretary of the Navy, a position he held until 1977.

As Secretary of the Navy he pushed for the development of four new Navy programs, particularly the *Ohio*-class submarine program. He also led the way on developing and fielding the AEGIS missile system, Trident missile program, CH-53E heavy-lift helicopter, and the F/A-18 Hornet attack aircraft. The introduction of these programs resulted in major improvements for the Navy and remain key national defense assets to this day. The Navy's growth under Ambassador Middendorf's leadership is in large part thanks to his relationships in Congress and reputation as a respected leader.

After serving as Secretary of the Navy, Ambassador Middendorf returned to the private sector. He served as the president and chief executive officer of Financial General Bankshares, which eventually became First American Bank.

After the 1980 election, Ambassador Middendorf led the CIA transition team for President Reagan's incoming administration. President Reagan then nominated him to be U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States in 1981. He served in this position until accepting an appointment as U.S. Representative to the European Community, now known as the European Union.

In retirement, Ambassador Middendorf has remained a person of tremendous intellect and achievement and has become a prolific writer. Ambassador Middendorf continues to share his strong and insightful opinions as a frequent contributor to the "Providence Journal." While we don't always agree, his columns always make for a lively and interesting read. He has also written several books, and his newest

title, "On My 100-Year Watch: Tyrants and Patriots," is set to be released later this year.

Following the tradition of naming naval destroyers after U.S. naval leaders and heroes, the future *Arleigh Burke*-class guided-missile destroyer—DDG-138—will be named USS *J. William Middendorf*. Once commissioned, the USS *J. William Middendorf* will join U.S. naval forces in protecting our country for years to come. And today, I am proud to rise in recognition of Ambassador J. William Middendorf, an exceptional Rhode Islander and American, and wish him a happy 100th birthday.

#### TRIBUTE TO J. WILLIAM MIDDENDORF II

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I rise today to wish a happy 100th birthday to J. William Middendorf II, known to family and friends as Bill. Bill lives in Little Compton, RI, and celebrated this remarkable milestone on Sunday. Bill led a distinguished career in public service. He served in World War II as a naval engineering officer and navigator. He was appointed U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands in 1969. Following his ambassadorship, he served as Under Secretary of the Navy.

In 1974, Middendorf was appointed by President Nixon to serve as the 62nd Secretary of the Navy. During his leadership in the Navy, Middendorf championed the Navy's submarine program and oversaw the creation of General Dynamics Electric Boat's Quonset Point location. Rhode Islanders know well the importance of the Quonset Point facility to our State's economy and its role at the forefront of our national security efforts. Bill was also instrumental in the development of the F/A 18 Hornet, which was in part named for the Revolutionary warship, the USS *Hornet* that had been commissioned by his ancestor, Captain William Stone. And he approved the first Marine Corps Marathon, which is still run to this day.

Last December, I was very pleased to take to the Senate floor to celebrate that an Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer was named USS *J. William Middendorf*, which follows the tradition of naming destroyers after U.S. naval leaders. That recognition was a testament to Bill's remarkable career in public service and many contributions to our State and country. Bill, my best wishes to you on your 100th birthday.

#### 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise today on behalf of my colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE and myself, to recognize the 60th anniversary of the Community College of Rhode Island—CCRI—which opened its doors on September 24, 1964. Over the last six decades, CCRI has grown into New England's largest public, 2-year degree