

first bid for city council, she persevered and ultimately earned the trust of her community. Through her integrity, vision, and dedication, Kari Birdseye continues to inspire those around her to serve with courage and purpose. On behalf of the people of California's 8th Congressional District, it is my honor to recognize Kari Birdseye for her exemplary service and unwavering commitment to our community.

HONORING CLAY COUNTY  
VETERANS

HON. AARON BEAN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 28, 2025*

Mr. BEAN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, Veterans Day is a day when our Nation pauses to give thanks to the brave men and women who have worn the uniform of the United States of America.

In Clay County, Florida, honoring our veterans isn't just something we do once a year, it is part of who we are. This county's history is woven with stories of service: from generations who trained at Camp Blanding, to those who served overseas in defense of freedom, and to the many veterans who continue to serve our community today as teachers, business owners, first responders, and volunteers.

Clay County's patriotism runs deep. You see it every day, in the flags flying over our neighborhoods, the quiet moments of respect at community events, and the countless ways our citizens care for those who've returned home from service. This is a county that not only thanks its veterans but walks beside them.

Today, as we reflect on their courage and sacrifice, we remember that our freedom was, and is, secured by ordinary Americans who answered an extraordinary call. We honor those who served, those who continue to serve, and those who made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our country.

So, on behalf of a grateful Nation, We thank the veterans and military families of Clay County. They are the living heart of our freedom, and we are thankful every single day for all they have given. God bless our veterans, God bless Clay County, and God bless the United States of America.

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF AURORA'S CENTER FOR APPLIED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

HON. JASON CROW

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 28, 2025*

Mr. CROW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the recent opening of the Community College of Aurora's Center for Applied Science and Technology (CAST) Building in Aurora, Colorado.

This is the first new building the college has opened in 20 years, and it marks a significant milestone. The CAST Building will house high-demand programs such as construction, diesel power mechanics, cybersecurity, engineering,

and renewable energy. It will open new pathways for students and create lasting opportunities that will benefit both the college and the surrounding community for years to come.

CAST will host programs in partnership with BuildStrong Academy of Colorado, including industry aligned workforce training programs in construction, skilled trades, and applied technologies. This will open up further pipelines of skilled students who will enter the Colorado workforce in industries that are in considerable demand.

Furthermore, with the leadership of Dr. Mordecai Brownlee, the Community College of Aurora has experienced remarkable growth and progress. In August, the college opened its third campus in Centennial, focused on health care and first responder training. This new campus expands access to career-ready health sciences programs and student support services.

Additionally, the college reached record enrollment levels this year, with more than 9,500 students enrolled for the Fall 2025 semester, an increase of approximately 1,000 students from Fall 2024. This is the highest enrollment in the college's history and is due, in part, to incredible partnerships that the college fostered with Aurora Public Schools to create more accessible pathways to careers and higher education for high school students. These pathways include dual-enrollment, which will allow more high school students to graduate with college credits, OSHA certifications, and industry-recognized credentials— at no cost.

CAST will help meet the needs of this growing and diverse student body by providing expanded access to in-demand career training and education. It is a powerful example of how institutions like the Community College of Aurora are preparing the workforce of tomorrow.

My district, our state, and our Nation are stronger when we invest in our workforce, create opportunities for growth, and empower our communities. I congratulate the Community College of Aurora on the opening of the Center for Applied Science and Technology and thank them for their continued service to our community.

HONORING WARDS MARINE ELECTRIC'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JARED MOSKOWITZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 28, 2025*

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a truly remarkable milestone: the 75th anniversary of Wards Marine Electric, headquartered in my district in Fort Lauderdale. Seventy-five years—three-quarters of a century—is a rare achievement in American business. It speaks to resilience, vision, and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

Wards Marine Electric was founded under the bold vision of Ward, Sr., and that vision is being carried out tenfold today under the leadership of CEO Kristina Herbert. They have supported a plethora of non-profits, shown leadership in industry associations and fostered job growth and innovation in Fort Lauderdale and beyond. They strongly advocate for the marine industry at both local and national levels, and in doing so help build a fu-

ture for the industry that exhibits the highest standards and steadfast commitment to improvement. Wards Marine Electric has proven themselves to be a pillar of the community, and I am proud to host their headquarters in my district.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Wards Marine Electric on 75 years of remarkable achievement. May their past inspire continued innovation, their community engagement continues to uplift South Florida, and their vision for the future ensure the next 75 years are even brighter.

HONORING KATHERINE STOKES AS ONE OF CALIFORNIA'S 8TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT'S WOMEN OF THE YEAR

HON. JOHN GARAMENDI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 28, 2025*

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Katherine Stokes, recognized as one of California's 8th Congressional District's Women of the Year. Katherine is an innovator, entrepreneur, and community leader whose compassionate vision has reshaped how care, education, and service are delivered across California. As the founder and CEO of Spongies Comfort, a medical innovation company based in California, Katherine has brought humanity and creativity to healthcare. Katherine's invention of the Spongies Heart Armrest, a reusable, medical-grade cushion is now used in oncology, infusion, and radiology departments across leading hospitals such as Stanford, Kaiser, and UCSF. Her simple yet transformative design has improved patient comfort, reduced anxiety, and supported healthcare providers in delivering more compassionate care. Beyond her entrepreneurial achievements, Katherine serves on the Board of Directors of A Loving Organization Consortium (ALOC), a nonprofit dedicated to transforming healthcare systems from fear-based to love-based operations. She is also the founder of Innovation Rewards in School (IRIS), an educational initiative that teaches middle school students creativity, entrepreneurship, and purpose-driven leadership. Locally, Katherine coaches youth soccer for the Solano County Surf Soccer Club and continues to donate Spongies cushions to under-resourced clinics, children's hospitals, and veteran care facilities, providing comfort where it is needed most. Her latest project, a purple Heart Armrest and under-knee wedge, designed specifically for veterans, honors service members with dignity and care. Through every endeavor, Katherine exemplifies integrity, empathy, and resilience. She approaches every challenge with grace, turning obstacles into opportunities to serve. On behalf of the people of California's 8th Congressional District, it is my privilege to recognize Katherine Stokes for her groundbreaking innovation, compassionate leadership, and unwavering dedication to uplifting others.

RECOGNIZING IZZY SOTO AND THE  
U.S. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
TEAM

**HON. RUSSELL FRY**

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 28, 2025*

Mr. FRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Izzy Soto and her teammates on the United States National Development Team for winning a gold medal at the 2025 Pan American Inline Hockey Championships in Oaxtepec, Morelos, Mexico.

Representing our Nation with pride and determination, the team demonstrated remarkable resilience by winning four consecutive games to capture the championship title. I am especially proud to note that Izzy is from Myrtle Beach and was the only member of the Women's Junior Team from South Carolina, making her achievement even more meaningful for our state and the Grand Strand community.

Their accomplishment reflects the best of American spirit, teamwork, and perseverance. Competing at this level not only showcased their skill but also provided invaluable experience playing alongside and against some of the best athletes in the world.

I commend Izzy, her teammates, and their coaches for their dedication and sportsmanship, and I extend my best wishes to all those continuing to compete in future tournaments. Their success brings great pride to the United States and serves as an inspiration to young athletes everywhere.

CONGRATULATING KYLE WELK ON  
BEING NAMED THE 2025 MERLE  
HOWARD AWARD WINNER

**HON. LLOYD SMUCKER**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 28, 2025*

Mr. SMUCKER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize and congratulate Kyle Welk of Peach Bottom, Pennsylvania, on being named the 2025 Merle Howard Award winner at the 58th World Dairy Expo in Wisconsin.

Having grown up on a dairy farm, Kyle has dedicated his life to the dairy industry from a young age. On October 3, 2025, he received the Merle Howard Award, which is one of the highest honors a young person can achieve in the dairy industry.

Kyle's work ethic is demonstrated by his steady determination and pursuit of excellence. He began by showing cattle at local shows and progressed to state, regional, and national competitions. His commitment took him from working on a prestigious farm in Lancaster County to traveling across the United States and even to New Zealand. Kyle also won numerous state awards for his homebred cattle and swept the fitting contest at the 2024 World Dairy Expo.

Dairy farming is not an easy profession, but Kyle approached every task—from washing animals to packing their bedding—with passion, drive, and humility. These same qualities have made him stand out as one of the very best in fitting, raising, and breeding cattle.

Agriculture is the backbone of Pennsylvania's 11th District, and we are fortunate to

have a strong dairy industry. The grit and perseverance of individuals like Kyle Welk make this possible. His character and grit have earned him well-deserved recognition as the 2025 Merle Howard Award winner.

Through his achievements, Kyle sets an excellent example for young people in Pennsylvania's 11th District and beyond who aspire to careers in dairy and agriculture. I congratulate him and look forward to seeing all that his bright future holds.

HONORING SHERIFF-CORONER  
THOMAS A. FERRARA

**HON. MIKE THOMPSON**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 28, 2025*

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise with Congressman JOHN GARAMENDI to recognize Solano County Sheriff-Coroner Thomas A. Ferrara as he retires from law enforcement after 40 years with the Solano County Sheriff's Office and more than 45 years in law enforcement.

Born and raised in Lodi, Sheriff Ferrara began his law enforcement career in 1978 as a police cadet with the Rio Vista Police Department. He went on to serve as a reserve officer and later as a full-time officer with the Isleton Police Department before joining the Solano County Sheriff's Office in 1984. Over the next four decades, Sheriff Ferrara rose through the department's ranks, serving as Sergeant, Chief Deputy, Captain, and Under-sheriff. Sheriff Ferrara was appointed Sheriff-Coroner in 2012 and has been elected to three consecutive terms.

Throughout his tenure, Sheriff Ferrara has provided steady, principled leadership and left a lasting mark on our Solano County. He established the Concealed Carry Weapons program, which became a model for departments across the state, and founded the annual statewide CCW Conference, which brings together hundreds of participants from nearly 100 law enforcement agencies for training and collaboration. Under his leadership, our Solano County Sheriff's Office has completed major public safety improvements at their facilities, including the Stanton Correctional Facility, the Rourk Vocational Training Center, and key upgrades to the Justice Center Detention Facility and Animal Care Shelter.

Sheriff Ferrara has also guided our Solano County through some of its most challenging moments. He oversaw emergency operations during the 2014 Napa earthquake, the 2015 Wragg Fire, the 2017 Atlas Fire, the 2020 LNU Lightning Complex Fire, multiple severe winter storms, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout all these crises, Sheriff Ferrara reacted with calm, decisive leadership, helping ensure the safety of our community members and first responders.

Beyond his service to our Solano County, Sheriff Ferrara has been a respected leader among his peers statewide. He has served on the Board of Directors of the California State Sheriffs' Association and has chaired multiple committees, advancing training, standards, and collaboration across California law enforcement. Sheriff Ferrara is also a graduate of the FBI National Academy's 205th Session and holds numerous professional certifications

from the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training.

Sheriff Ferrara's lifelong dedication to public safety and his commitment to integrity, professionalism, and community service have earned him the respect of colleagues and the gratitude of the people he has served. A resident of Vacaville, he and his wife, Judi, look forward to retirement filled with travel, local car shows, and time with family.

Mr. Speaker, Sheriff-Coroner Thomas A. Ferrara has devoted more than four decades to protecting the people of Solano County and strengthening our community. It is fitting and proper that we honor him today for his exemplary leadership and service to our district.

HONORING LAKISHA MITCHELL-  
KEITH AS ONE OF CALIFORNIA'S  
8TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT'S  
WOMEN OF THE YEAR

**HON. JOHN GARAMENDI**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 28, 2025*

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Lakisha Mitchell-Keith, recognized as one of California's 8th Congressional District's Women of the Year. A proud Richmond native and third-generation member of the Mitchell family, renowned for civic and faith-based service, Lakisha has long exemplified leadership rooted in purpose and compassion. Her 15-year career as a federal law enforcement officer and supervisor with the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security demonstrated integrity, professionalism, and an enduring commitment to justice and safety. After her federal service, Lakisha earned her Juris Doctor from Golden Gate University School of Law with a specialization in Public Interest Law, preparing her to advance equity and uplift underserved communities. She brings that same passion to her volunteer and advocacy work across Richmond and the Bay Area. A lifelong member of Bethel AME Church in San Francisco, she serves in multiple leadership roles, including President of the Lay Organization, Trustee Board Member, and is a part of the Stewardship & Finance Commission and Strategic Planning Team. She also holds regional leadership positions in the California Annual Conference Lay Organization and the Conference Board of Trustees. In 2025, she embraced a new chapter in her spiritual journey, becoming a licensed Licentiate in the AME Church. Lakisha's recent advocacy at Stege Elementary School further demonstrates her drive for educational justice. As a School Site Council member, she helped bring visibility to longstanding facility concerns and was a key force behind renewed public commitment to the school's future. Whether in law enforcement, legal advocacy, faith leadership, or local activism, Lakisha Mitchell-Keith brings courage, vision, and integrity to everything she does. Her life's work reflects the highest ideals of public service. On behalf of the people of California's 8th Congressional District, it is my honor to recognize Lakisha Mitchell-Keith for her devotion to justice, community empowerment, and spiritual service.