

Baptist Church of Quitman for its long and storied history of service to the Greater Quitman area. I congratulate them on this incredible milestone.

CONGRATULATING FIRE CHIEF
GINA SWEAT ON HER RETIREMENT

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 2025

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the outstanding public service performed by Memphis' first female Fire Chief, Gina Sweat, who retired last month after more than 33 years with the department. Ms. Sweat joined the Memphis Fire Department in May of 1992, one of two women in her recruiting class of 84, after receiving a bachelor of business administration in 1988 from Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, where she played collegiate basketball. After joining the department, she continued her education by receiving a bachelor's of professional studies in fire administration in 2000 and a master's of professional studies in strategic leadership in 2013 from the University of Memphis. She rose through the ranks as a driver, lieutenant, battalion chief and division chief, deputy chief of logistics and deputy director until she was appointed Fire Chief by former Mayor Jim Strickland on January 1, 2016. In interviews through the years Chief Sweat said she learned to "over-prepare" for each new assignment. As chief, she undertook initiatives to improve the Insurance Services Office, made multi-million dollar renovations of the 911 Communications Center, the Office of Emergency Management building and built three new state-of-the-art fire stations and a new fire administration building. Chief Sweat's tenure also saw the department expand into responding to medical emergencies. It also included the Covid epidemic period when the fire department was the lead local agency conducting vaccinations. In my contacts with Chief Sweat, she was always pleasant. She was easy to communicate with and she certainly had a professional demeanor, which inspired my belief that the Fire Department was in good hands. Sweat had "the most appropriate name for the job" joked a local columnist, and her tenure as chief led to significant advances. I wish her well in retirement.

HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEORGE COPADIS

HON. CHRIS PAPPAS

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 2025

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the retirement of George Copadis, the Commissioner of New Hampshire Employment Security (NHES). George's longstanding career in public service encourages us all to serve as strong advocates for our local communities and state. George will be retiring after decades as a public servant.

As the NHES Commissioner and Chair of the Board of Commissioners on the Manchester Housing and Redevelopment Author-

ity, George consistently demonstrated his commitment to his colleagues and his community. George's steady leadership guided the agency through the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring Granite Staters received efficient and reliable services. Also serving as the President of the Board of Directors at St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral, George's generous and cooperative spirit knows no bounds.

A lifelong resident of Manchester, George represents the very best of our community. George's compassion and kindness provided immense support to individuals experiencing challenging situations. His dedication to his work had a significantly positive impact on countless Granite Staters who benefitted from George's knowledge and support. But perhaps most of all, George will be remembered for the delicious baklava that he brought to special meetings.

On behalf of the constituents of New Hampshire's First Congressional District, I commend George for his dedication to Granite Staters. My well wishes are with George and his family as he enjoys retirement.

HONORING LT. COLONEL DEIDRE
D. SMITH

HON. TRENT KELLY

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 2025

Mr. KELLY of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the service of Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith, Director of Public Affairs for the Mississippi National Guard. In this role, she provides critical counsel to the Adjutant General and senior leaders on command information, community outreach, and media engagement, ensuring the Guard remains connected to the citizens of Mississippi.

A Hattiesburg native, Lt. Col. Smith has served across the United States, Europe, and overseas in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Throughout her distinguished career, she has taken on leadership roles in Human Resources, Public Affairs, Information Operations, and Equal Opportunity, demonstrating versatility and excellence in every assignment.

Within the Mississippi Army National Guard, she has held several key positions, including State Director of Public Affairs, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, and Director of Outreach Services. Her dedicated service has earned her numerous awards, including the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and the Mississippi Magnolia Cross, reflecting her professionalism and commitment to duty.

Lt. Col. Smith is a graduate of Marion Military Institute, Southeastern Louisiana University, and the University of Oklahoma. She has also completed advanced military education through the Command and General Staff College, the Defense Information School, and the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute. In addition to her military achievements, she was selected for Leadership Mississippi in 2018 and named among the Mississippi TOP 50 in 2022.

She resides in Brandon with her husband, Maj. James Kevin Polk of the 172nd Airlift Wing, and their daughters, Pfc. Harley Smith and Pvt. Lyndi Polk, both newly enlisted mem-

bers of the Mississippi Army National Guard, continuing their family's proud tradition of service.

INTRODUCTION OF THE SERVICE
ACADEMIES DISTRICT OF CO-
LUMBIA EQUALITY ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 2025

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today, I introduce the Service Academies District of Columbia Equality Act, which would give the District of Columbia the same number of appointments and nominations to the U.S. service academies as states. Currently, each member of the House and each senator is allocated five appointments to each service academy—the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy and the U.S. Air Force Academy—and each member of the House and each senator is allowed 15 nominations for each appointment. Therefore, since D.C. has no senators, D.C. is deprived of 10 appointments and, assuming all appointments are vacant, 150 nominations to each service academy. Senator TIM Kaine has introduced the companion bill.

This bill would provide equality for D.C. residents who choose to serve their country by applying to a service academy. It is remarkable that D.C. residents volunteer to fight and die for a country that denies them statehood, voting representation in Congress and full home rule. D.C. servicemembers have helped secure voting rights for people around the world, yet have always been denied those same rights when they returned home. D.C. residents, who pay the same federal taxes as residents of states, deserve the same opportunity as residents of states to attend our prestigious service academies.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

RECOGNIZING THE RETIREMENT
OF CITY COUNCILWOMAN ANITA
BEDWELL

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 2025

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the retirement of Anita Bedwell, a City Councilwoman for Rainbow City, Alabama.

Anita was born in Rainbow City to Eugene and Loretta Wimpee on August 27, 1961, along with her sisters, Lisa Abernathy and Susie Carr. She graduated from Southside High School in 1979, attended Gadsden State Community College, and graduated from the University of Alabama at Birmingham with a degree in Dental Hygiene.

After working as a dental hygienist for 15 years, Anita joined her family's construction business and eventually started her own business, Rainbow Pipe and Metal.

Councilwoman Bedwell has tirelessly served on the Rainbow City Council for 17 years. She was first elected in 2008 and has served four terms. As a member of the City Council, she

has been an integral part of growing Rainbow City into the fastest-growing city in Etowah County. Rainbow City would not be the thriving community it is today without her leadership. Anita has served on the Utilities Board since 2013 and served as the chairwoman in 2019.

Anita married Jeff Bedwell on October 22, 1983. They have one son, Andrew (Chance), and two grandsons, Britton and Cotton Bedwell. A devout Christian, she has been a member of Riddles Bend Baptist Church since 1981 and has served as a children's Sunday School teacher. In her free time, Anita enjoys volunteering for Renew our Rivers and Rainbow City Clean Up Day, as well as traveling, boating, cattle farming, and spending as much time as possible with friends and family.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in recognizing Councilwoman Anita Bedwell, and thanking her for her service to Rainbow City, Alabama. Congratulations to Anita.

CELEBRATING VICTORIA
COLLEGE'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. MICHAEL CLOUD

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 2025

Mr. CLOUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Victoria College, one of the oldest community colleges in Texas, as it celebrates its 100th year anniversary.

For generations, Victoria College has served families across the Golden Crescent region, and each year, thousands of students enter its doors for education and training. In 1925, Victoria College had a humble beginning in a small classroom on the third floor of a high school with just over 50 students. 100 years later, the campus now spans more than 60 acres and enrolls over 6,000 students each year.

The growth and success of Victoria College has been invaluable to the regional and economic development of the Coastal Bend region, and the seven counties it serves (Victoria, DeWitt, Calhoun, Jackson, Refugio, Gonzales and Lavaca). Students can earn degrees or certificates in a number of different programs, including Business & Technology, Industrial Trades, Public Service, and much more. As an institution, Victoria College has been integral in deepening relationships between businesses, government officials, and the regional workforce for decades.

Its enduring success is a testament to its identity as an established community partner. Beyond its comprehensive program offerings and its dedicated staff, Victoria College contributes to local cultural and heritage growth. The Museum of the Coastal Bend, located on campus, showcases the rich history of the coastal region. The Leo J. Center for the Performing Arts is owned and operated by the College, and the state-of-the-art Emerging Technology Complex is used for professional development, conferences, and local events.

On this 100th Anniversary, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating Victoria College and its long-standing history as an example of the importance of civic institutions for the preservation of our future generations.

REMEMBERING MR. DAVID "DAVE"
FOWLER

HON. GREGORY F. MURPHY

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 2025

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of Mr. David "Dave" Fowler, who dedicated much of his life to serving the people of North Carolina. Dave was raised in Greenville and after his graduation from Western Carolina University, stayed in Jackson County to work in the local community.

Dave started his career as an educator in Jackson County in the public school system, where his efforts inspired the next generation of learners. His desire to serve the public good took him to work for the Jackson County Government. He also assumed numerous volunteer roles including acting as the Chair of the County Board of Elections and Chairman of the Jackson County Republican Party.

After Dave and his wife, Wanda, resettled in Eastern North Carolina, and in his role as a servant leader, he represented his community as a dedicated member of the Noon Rotary Club. Given his dedication and civic minded competence, he was appointed to the Coastal Regional Solid Waste Authority and the Carteret County Board of Equalization and Review. Given his desire to also lead in the political arena, he was later elected as Chairman of the Carteret County Republican Party. His election as a Carteret County Commissioner further paved the way for his later roles as Town Commissioner and, ultimately, Mayor of Cape Carteret. Dave's commitment and service to his communities is remembered for his selfless desire to better his community and serve all his constituents. His service has led many Eastern North Carolinians to live a better life with a brighter future.

Mr. Speaker please join me in remembering Mr. David "Dave" Fowler's life and legacy.

RECOGNIZING THE BRAVERY AND
HEROISM OF OKOLONA FIRE
PROTECTION DISTRICT

HON. MORGAN MCGARVEY

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 2025

Mr. MCGARVEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Okolona Fire Protection District for their bravery and heroism in response to the tragic crash of UPS Airlines Flight 2976 in Louisville, Kentucky.

On Tuesday, November 4th, a cargo jet bound for Hawaii crashed moments after take-off. Unable to gain altitude, the jet went down just beyond the airfield, erupting into flames as hundreds of thousands of pounds of jet fuel ignited. The resulting fire engulfed an area the size of nine football fields, and the thick, black plume of smoke could be seen from anywhere in the city. I have lived in Louisville my whole life and could never have imagined seeing something like this. For a moment, Louisville looked apocalyptic—it was heartbreaking.

But in these trying times, we saw the best of our community. Within minutes, Okolona firefighters were there, the first on site, confronting a scene of unimaginable destruction

with discipline and resolve. In this moment, they showed that heroism is not found in comfort—it is revealed in crisis. They chose duty over fear. Their rapid, coordinated response contained the flames, protected nearby homes, and stopped the disaster from spreading. Their courage in horrific circumstances saved lives and protected hundreds of families from losing their homes to the inferno.

Louisville is safer because of the men and women of Okolona Fire and the more than twenty departments who came from across the city and the Commonwealth to assist. Their bravery and selflessness reflect their deep love for this community and stand as a testament to what it means to serve. I ask all my colleagues to join me in honoring these brave first responders for their extraordinary service and sacrifice.

HONORING THE LIFE AND PUBLIC
SERVICE OF DAMASCUS TOWN
COUNCILMAN JACK MCCRADY,
JR.

HON. H. MORGAN GRIFFITH

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 2025

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and longtime service of a dedicated public official, Jack McCrady, Jr., who passed away on Thursday, October 2, 2025.

Councilman McCrady called Damascus, Virginia, home for much of his life. His love for his community and its progress inspired him to seek elected office.

Over the years, Mr. McCrady was a worthy representative of the Damascus community. His experience in local government continually won him praise and recognition from his fellow peers and the voters of Damascus.

As a result of building trust and experience with the local community, Mr. McCrady served as Mayor of Damascus for 20 years. In addition, he served on the Washington County Board of Supervisors. Most recently, Damascus elected Mr. McCrady to the Damascus Town Council.

Moreover, Mr. McCrady served on various boards during his life. One such body was the very first Appalachian Trail Days committee, which is responsible for organizing the very popular festival that attracts thousands of people to Damascus every year. When I visit the annual festival, I see the true fun and spirit of the festival and how much it means to the local community.

Mr. McCrady's influence on his community was noticed by many. In a public announcement, Damascus described Councilman McCrady's loss as a presence that will be missed. It surely will be.

Councilman McCrady is survived by his loving wife of 52 years, Connie; son, Kris and wife Danielle; daughter, Valerie; sister, Patty and husband Harvey Clark; brother, Charlie McCrady; and sister-in-law, Shelby Blevins. He was preceded in death by his father, Jack Richard McCrady, Sr; his mother, Dorothy Virginia Berry; and stepfather, C.C. Cowan.

Through his various roles in public office, Mr. McCrady provided strong and experienced leadership that benefitted his Southwest Virginia community. I am proud to recognize and honor a local public servant whose impact