

HONORING THE LEGACY OF DR.
JOSEPH I. CASTRO

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and remember the life and legacy of Dr. Joseph Isaac Castro, a devoted educator, public servant, and beloved son of California's San Joaquin Valley, who passed away on August 14, 2025, at the age of 58, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Dr. Castro's life embodied the American Dream. Born and raised in Hanford California, the grandson of Mexican immigrants and farmworkers, and the son of a single mother, he rose from humble beginnings to become a national leader in high education. He was the first in his family to graduate from college, earning degrees from the University of California Berkeley, and a Ph.D. from Stanford University in Higher Education Policy and Leadership.

His remarkable career spanned more than three decades, during which he held senior leadership roles across the University of California system, including Berkeley, Davis, Santa Barbara, San Francisco, and as a part of the founding leadership at UC Merced.

In 2013, Dr. Castro made history by becoming President of California State University, Fresno; the first native Californian and first Mexican American to serve in this role. Under his transformative leadership, Fresno State emerged as a national leader in supporting and graduating students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.

On January 4, 2021, Dr. Castro assumed the role of CSU Chancellor, becoming the first Mexican American and the first California native to lead the 23-campus CSU system. His appointment represents a milestone for diversity in higher education and a hopeful future for the nearly half a million students across the CSU system.

Dr. Castro was more than an accomplished academic administrator; he was a kind and compassionate man who inspired thousands. He believed deeply in the transformative power of education to change lives, families, and entire communities. His leadership earned national recognition, including the prestigious Ohtli Award, the highest honor given by the Government of Mexico for service to the Mexican and Mexican American community.

To his family, Dr. Joseph I. Castro was a devoted husband, father, and man of faith. He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Mary; their children Isaac, Lauren, and Jess; and daughter-in-law, Marilyn; as well as by his friends and the many lives he touched throughout his life. Even in his final months, he remained guided by purpose and a deep belief in every student's potential. His legacy lives on in the lives he changed, the institutions he strengthened, and the communities he served.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Dr. Joseph Isaac Castro for his extraordinary service to California and the Nation. May his life continue to inspire future generations to lead with vision, compassion, and an unshakable commitment to justice and opportunity for all.

HONORING THE LIFE OF LEE
GARY "TOT" BOOKER

HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Lee Gary "Tot" Booker, who passed away peacefully on September 10, 2025, at the age of 85. Mr. Booker was a trailblazing firefighter, a dedicated public servant, and a beloved member of the Marin County community.

Born on July 9, 1940, in Bryant, Mississippi, Gary overcame a childhood marked by serious illness through the care of his grandparents, who raised him as their own. He excelled in both academics and athletics, showing early signs of the determination and perseverance that would define his life. He left Mississippi after high school and moved to Marin City, California, where he joined his mother and stepfather and immediately began working at Marin General Hospital.

In 1961, Gary was drafted by the state of Mississippi but chose instead to enlist in the United States Navy in San Rafael, California. He served nearly six years, including aboard the U.S.S. Ticonderoga during the Vietnam War, where he worked on crash, firefighting, and rescue teams. His service shaped his lifelong calling to protect others.

Upon completing his military service, Gary joined the Marin County Fire Department in 1966. Over the course of three decades, he broke barriers and blazed trails of firsts. In 1970, he became the first African American Fire Captain in Marin County, leading the Marin City Station and establishing its first community relations program. His leadership, professionalism, and courage earned him successive promotions to Assistant Fire Chief in 1981, Battalion Chief in 1984, and County Safety Officer later in his distinguished career. Through his many years of service, Mr. Booker received numerous awards and honors for his dedication to the safety and well-being of Marin County residents.

In 1970, Gary married Judith Ann Du Pont. He was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather who cherished time with his family and found joy in the outdoors. An avid hunter and fisherman, Gary's annual trips to Colorado and Montana were a source of great happiness. His warmth, humor, and storytelling made him a pillar in his community and a mentor to countless colleagues and friends.

Mr. Booker is survived by his daughter, Lomia and her husband Allen, stepdaughter Donnailla, and his grandchildren Nicole, Alayah, and Jordan. He is also survived by his brothers Ralph and Drew, sisters Trellis and Norma, and his uncle Tobe, as well as many nieces, nephews, relatives, and friends. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife Judith, daughter Garrian "Beetle," and several siblings.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that Lee Gary "Tot" Booker was a man of courage and vision whose trailblazing service helped shape the Marin County Fire Department and inspired generations of firefighters who followed. I respectfully ask that you join me in honoring his extraordinary life and extending condolences to his family, friends, and all those who had the privilege of knowing him.

RECOGNIZING VINCE MARCHETTA
AS THE CHAMPION OF THE
WEEK FOR OHIO'S 13TH CON-
GRESSIONAL DISTRICT

HON. EMILIA STRONG SYKES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Mrs. SYKES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Vince Marchetta as the Champion of the Week for Ohio's 13th Congressional District.

Vince recently earned the State Lead Ambassador of the Year Award from the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. This award recognizes his efforts to help make cancer a national priority.

After losing his wife, Betsy, to metastatic cervical cancer, Vince became dedicated to supporting families affected by cancer and fighting for a cure. As an American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network volunteer for the past six years, Vince has worked tirelessly alongside some of the most dedicated and passionate advocates to ensure everyone has a fair and just opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer.

Specifically, he has worked to advocate for better screening to prevent late-stage diagnosis, improving access to health care and treatment, clinical trials, and funding for research for those battling cancer. He is passionate about ensuring all Americans have access to the medical care that could save their lives.

With this award, and all the hard work that came before it, Vince is a shining example of why Ohio's 13th Congressional District is known as the "Birthplace of Champions." He has certainly made our community proud.

RECOGNIZING THE CAREER OF
ERICA "RIKKI" MILLER AND HER
WORK ON BEHALF OF MICHIGAN'S 3RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

HON. HILLARY J. SCHOLTEN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Ms. SCHOLTEN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the remarkable contributions of a woman who needs no introduction, Ms. Erica "Rikki" Miller, to our country and to the House of Representatives. For nearly the last decade, Rikki has served with integrity, compassion, and a deep sense of duty. Whether it was driving a Member as a humble staff assistant, enhancing the caucus communications, directing communications on energy policy for a senior Member of Energy and Commerce or helping a brand new freshman establish her office as chief of staff, Rikki approached every task with the same commitment—to make life better for the people we serve.

Rikki's decade of congressional service began as an intern for Congresswoman DEBBIE DINGELL, where she was soon hired full time as constituent relations and press assistant. After two years with Congresswoman DINGELL, Rikki joined now Leader JEFFRIES inaugural leadership team. As their press assistant, Rikki helped plan the Caucus issues conference and lead the Caucus's communication

efforts during the Mueller trials and historic first impeachment. She then spent four years with Congresswoman KATHY CASTOR as her communications director, where she led the team during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

After four years with Congresswoman CASTOR, Rikki was called back home to Michigan to be chief of staff for my district office. As chief, Rikki helped build the office from the ground up, leading the team through my first term. There, Rikki established herself as a mentor to those in the office, and to other chiefs as well.

Public service isn't always glamorous. It demands patience, perseverance, and quiet strength. There are early mornings, late nights, and countless moments when the work you do goes unnoticed by the world outside. But it's people like Rikki who keep everything running—the unseen hands and steady hearts behind the work we all depend on, whether we realize it or not.

Rikki has been so much more than a House employee, she's been a mentor to new young staff, a colleague, and a friend to all. Rikki lights up any room she walks in. She knows everyone's name and treats everyone the same. She has shared her knowledge generously, guided others through challenges, and shown us what public service truly looks like. Many of us here have learned from her—not just how to do our jobs, but how to do them with purpose.

We will miss Rikki and her steady presence, her joyful spirit, and her years of experience. But we take comfort in knowing that the values she has instilled will continue to guide this workplace in the dozens of new staffers she has trained and inspired. She has left it stronger, kinder, and more resilient than when she arrived.

On behalf of a grateful country, and especially the people of Michigan's 3rd Congressional District, we thank her.

HONORING THE VISIT OF HIS ALL-HOLINESS ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

HON. SARAH MCBRIDE

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Ms. MCBRIDE. Mr. Speaker, this September, our Nation had the distinct honor of welcoming His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Washington, D.C. As the spiritual leader of over 300 million Orthodox Christians around the world, His All-Holiness has earned global recognition. His decades of service have been marked by moral clarity and a steadfast belief that faith must be a force for reconciliation.

In every part of the world, the Ecumenical Patriarch has used his respected voice to unite religious leaders against the use of violence in the name of faith. At the same time, he has advanced the causes of human rights and environmental protection—issues that reflect his conviction that moral responsibility extends to both humanity and creation. His visit to Washington this September was a continuation of that mission, as he met with President Donald Trump and Members of Congress from

both parties to reaffirm our shared values of peace and understanding.

During this historic visit, His All-Holiness was also recognized in New York with the Templeton Prize—one of the world's most distinguished honors celebrating spiritual vision and leadership. This recognition, together with his meetings in our capital, reflects the vital role that faith leaders of his stature play in advancing the universal principles of liberty, mutual respect, and dialogue that strengthen our common humanity.

HONORING THE LIFE OF JOHN CHARLES HARRIS

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of John Charles Harris, a giant of California agriculture and the San Joaquin Valley, who recently passed away at the age of 81. He was a devoted husband, visionary businessman, mentor, leader, and dear friend whose contributions shaped generations of farmers, ranchers, and horsemen throughout our state and Nation.

John was born on July 14, 1943, and was a lifelong resident of Fresno County. A proud graduate of UC Davis, he also served honorably in the United States Army. His roots in the Valley ran deep, and his lifelong dedication to agriculture and community set him apart as a pillar of integrity and service.

As the driving force behind Harris Farms and Harris Ranch Beef Company, John played a pivotal role in building one of California's largest and most innovative agricultural enterprises. From his family's beginnings in farming, he helped grow Harris Farms into a sprawling multimillion-dollar operation known for its innovation, quality, and sustainability. The farm produced over 30 different crops including garlic, pistachios, and wine grapes, and was home to the iconic Harris Ranch Inn and Restaurant, a familiar and beloved stop for travelers on Interstate 5 between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Under John's leadership, Harris Ranch Beef Company became one of the largest beef producers in the Western United States.

Beyond the ranch, John was revered in the world of Thoroughbred horse racing. He bred and raced numerous champions and stood out as a passionate advocate for the industry. His leadership extended to roles on the California Horse Racing Board, California Thoroughbred Breeders Association, Thoroughbred Owners of California, and the Jockey Club.

John's influence transcended business and horse racing. He was deeply committed to education, mentorship, and philanthropy. John's leadership extended far beyond agriculture and racing. He was a devoted advocate for education and public service. Whether through philanthropy, mentorship, or policy leadership, he was always focused on empowering the next generation. John supported Fresno State's Maddy Institute and established the Jack A. Harris Memorial Scholarship Fund to help young agricultural leaders succeed. His acts of generosity, whether public or private, were grounded in a genuine belief in uplifting others and investing in the future of his community.

In June of this year, John married Cookie Harris. He is survived by Cookie, extended family, and many cherished friends, colleagues, and mentees who were touched by his humility, wisdom, and compassion.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring and celebrating the extraordinary life of John Charles Harris, my dear friend whose legacy, rooted in hard work, vision, and generosity, will live on through the land he stewarded, the horses he raised, the communities he served, and the countless lives he inspired.

RECOGNIZING FREEMAN JOHNSON

HON. WILLIAM R. KEATING

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Mr. KEATING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Freeman Johnson, a resident of Centerville, Massachusetts and the oldest survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Born on March 11, 1920, Johnson was raised in Waltham, Massachusetts. After graduating high school, Johnson attended Massachusetts Nautical School in Boston, presently Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Buzzards Bay. He then went on to enlist in the United States Navy in December 1939. After completing training in Newport, Rhode Island, Johnson was assigned to serve aboard the USS *St. Louis* as a Machinist First Class.

On the morning of December 7, 1941, the USS *St. Louis* was docked at Pearl Harbor awaiting repairs to its boiler. Johnson was working at the bottom of the ship in the boiler room when the attacks began. Although he could not see the strikes, he could feel and hear the vibrations as the USS *Arizona* and USS *Oklahoma* were struck. Understanding the urgency of the situation, Johnson and his fellow shipmates quickly got to work to repair the boiler. In less than 40 minutes the USS *St. Louis* was up and underway, earning the nickname "the Lucky Lou."

After Pearl Harbor, Johnson was transferred to the USS *Iowa* to help commission the ship that would bring President Franklin D. Roosevelt across the Atlantic Ocean for the Tehran Conference with Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin in November 1943. It was also on the USS *Iowa* in Tokyo Bay, where Johnson would watch the Japanese sign the Instrument of Surrender on the USS *Missouri*.

After the war, Johnson returned home to Waltham and married Ruth Hills. Together they raised three daughters, Diane, Edie, and Cindy. For many years, Johnson worked as a machinist at W.H. Nichols. Known for his steadfast work ethic, he retired at age 90 from Meals on Wheels.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Freeman Johnson, and I ask that my colleagues join me this Veterans Day in thanking him and the millions of veterans and service members who have bravely dedicated their lives to protecting our country.