

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING THE VISIT OF ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH OF THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO THE UNITED STATES

HON. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 17, 2025

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the visit to the United States of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of the Orthodox Christian Church.

His lifelong advocacy for religious liberty, interfaith understanding, and international peace has earned global recognition, including the Templeton Prize.

According to Orthodox Christian tradition, the Ecumenical Patriarch is a direct descendant of, and successor to, the Apostle Andrew in the see of Constantinople, and His All-Holiness has devoted his ministry to fostering greater understanding among people of faith.

It is an honor to welcome religious leaders to our Nation's capital. I join my Orthodox Christian constituents and communities across America in celebrating the visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch and commending his continued work in service of human dignity and peace.

HONORING VILMA AQUINO AS ONE OF CALIFORNIA'S 8TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT'S WOMEN OF THE YEAR

HON. JOHN GARAMENDI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 17, 2025

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Vilma Aquino as one of California's 8th Congressional District's Women of the Year. Vilma has spent over three decades transforming lives and communities through the power of gardening. Since the 1990's, she has been a passionate educator and advocate for sustainable growing practices, community health, and environmental awareness. In 2009, she founded the Vallejo People's Garden, which provided fresh produce to the Christian Help Center's kitchen for ten years, feeding up to 75 clients daily. For fifteen years, she worked with students from Touro University to teach future healthcare professionals how gardening supports the concept of food as medicine. Her innovative work with Kaiser Permanente's Rehab Department and Residency Program brought healing and hands-on gardening education to patients, caregivers, and medical staff. Over the years, Vilma has helped several community gardens in Vallejo get started, including the garden at the Reynnaissance Family Shelter in 2014. In 2024 and 2025, she co-founded the Bay Area Butterfly Festival, which attracted thousands of

attendees and raised awareness about the declining Western Monarch Butterfly population and the critical role of native plants in ecosystem health. She coordinates a wide variety of gardening and wellness classes for the community, including culturally relevant offerings such as "Filipino Fruits and Vegetables You Can Grow at Home in Solano County." Vilma is currently a Board Member at the Global Center for Success on Mare Island and continues to work with organizations such as Touro University, Kaiser Permanente, and Solano Community. On behalf of the people of California's 8th Congressional District, it is my pleasure to honor and recognize Vilma Aquino for her invaluable contributions to our community.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PROTECTING HOMES FROM TRAINS ACT OF 2025

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 17, 2025

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today, I introduce the Protecting Homes from Trains Act of 2025, which would establish a grant program for the design and construction of barriers to mitigate rail activity that can harm homes and their occupants, including derailments, noise and vibrations. District of Columbia residents frequently tell me about the negative impact of train noise and vibrations on their lives. Train noise and vibrations can harm health and quality of life and can even harm the structural integrity of homes.

As a member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and as the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, I have been working to reduce train noise and vibrations. I have convened community meetings with the Federal Railroad Administration, the District of Columbia Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. I established the Congressional Quiet Rails Caucus. I introduced a bill directing the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study on how to reduce train noise and vibrations near homes. I separately requested GAO to conduct that study, which it has agreed to do.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF ERIC MCARTHUR

HON. PETE STAUBER

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 17, 2025

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and service of Eric McArthur, a police officer, veteran, and most importantly, a father and husband. Serving as a police officer

for the city of Saint Paul for over nine years, Eric courageously worked in the K-9 unit at the side of his K-9 companion, Finn. His commitment to service was demonstrated not only by his dedication to his job but also through the support and strength he showed his colleagues by participating in the department's Honor Guard and Peer Support Team.

His dedication to his country didn't stop there. Eric was also a member of the Army National Guard, serving three tours overseas and honorably receiving the Bronze Star for his service. His years in the military forged lifelong friendships through valor and sacrifice. It was Eric's honor to serve his country and community.

Above all, Eric's family was his pride and joy. He was a loving husband to his wife of 18 years, Shanna, and a committed father to his two kids, Caleb and Lila. His presence was evident in all their lives, and his compassion, love, and steadfastness will be deeply missed by them. A leader of his community in the fullest sense and a dedicated father and husband, Eric will truly be missed by all the lives he touched—colleagues, friends, and family alike. May Eric rest in peace.

HONORING WARMINSTER TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICER ERIC BARANOWSKI'S 35 YEARS OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 17, 2025

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Officer Eric Baranowski for his thirty-eight years of dedicated and distinguished service in law enforcement, including thirty-five years with the Warminster Police Department. His lifelong commitment to public safety and community service exemplifies the very best of American policing.

At a young age, Officer Baranowski knew he wanted to serve his community as a police officer. As a participant in the Warminster Police Explorer Program in the 1980's, he developed a deep respect for the men and women who dedicate their lives to protecting others. After graduating from high school in June 1988, he attended the Montgomery County Community College Police Academy, where he began his journey into law enforcement. In April 1989, at nineteen years old, he was hired by the Bryn Athyn Borough Police Department, beginning a remarkable thirty-eight-year career. Two years later, in February 1991, he joined the Warminster Police Department, where he would faithfully serve his community for the next three and a half decades.

During his time, Officer Baranowski developed a strong interest in accident investigation. At a time when the department did not yet offer specialized training in this field, he

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took the initiative to attend courses on his own time, using his personal vacation days to become a certified Accident Reconstructionist. His expertise grew to encompass vehicle, motorcycle, and pedestrian accidents, making him a respected authority figure in traffic safety. As a member of the department's Traffic Safety Unit, he also specialized in speed enforcement, truck enforcement, and weighmaster duties.

Officer Baranowski chose to remain on patrol, believing that he could make the greatest impact by being out in the community—seeing, hearing, and engaging directly with the people he served. This philosophy not only guided his career but earned him the respect, trust, and admiration of Warminster residents.

Among his many accomplishments, one of the most memorable occurred roughly ten years ago, when a series of overnight burglaries struck local pizza and convenience shops. Through patient teamwork and surveillance, he and his fellow officers apprehended the suspects after a brief foot pursuit, uncovering stolen property and solving multiple open burglary cases across several jurisdictions. This case remains a testament to his dedication, vigilance, and the power of teamwork.

Having grown up in Warminster, Officer Baranowski possessed a unique understanding of and connection to his community. His familiarity with residents and business owners made him a trusted figure, someone to whom people could turn in moments of both crisis and celebration. Over the years, he built countless relationships grounded in mutual respect, compassion, and service. His chief often remarked that if something was needed, day or night, Officer Baranowski could make it happen.

Throughout his career, Officer Baranowski supported the people of Warminster through their best and worst moments. He attended weddings, funerals, and community events, celebrating and sharing sorrows with the people he served. His empathy and consistent presence left a lasting mark on countless lives. As Officer Baranowski's career comes to a close, this moment is bittersweet. Though retirement marks the end of an extraordinary career, it does not end his commitment to the community that shaped him. Warminster gave him his roots, his purpose, and a life of service that he will always cherish. He leaves behind a legacy of professionalism, compassion, and integrity that will inspire future generations of officers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in expressing our deepest gratitude to Officer Eric Baranowski for his exemplary service to the Warminster community and to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. His dedication to justice and his unwavering commitment to the safety and well-being of others represent the highest ideals of law enforcement. We wish him a fulfilling and well-deserved retirement.

HONORING THE RAYMONDVILLE
HIGH SCHOOL BEARKAT MARCH-
ING BAND

HON. VICENTE GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 17, 2025

Mr. VICENTE GONZALEZ of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the remark-

able achievements of the Raymondville High School Bearkat Marching Band, whose hard work, dedication, and talent have brought immense pride to the community of Raymondville and the Rio Grande Valley.

This year, the Bearkat Band earned an extraordinary honor by placing second in the University Interscholastic League (UIL) State Marching Band Competition in the Class 3A division. Competing among the very best bands in Texas, the Bearkat Band demonstrated exceptional musical talent, discipline, and teamwork that reflect the highest standards of performance and school spirit.

Through the help of their devoted directors and supported by families, teachers, and the Raymondville community, the Bearkat Band advanced to the state level after earning first place in their area competition. Their journey to the Alamodome in San Antonio was the culmination of countless hours of rehearsal and dedication.

On behalf of the 34th Congressional District of Texas, I wish to congratulate the Raymondville High School Bearkat Marching Band, their directors, and everyone who helped them achieve this extraordinary milestone. Their achievement inspires not only their peers across South Texas but students across the state to pursue their passions.

HONORING GRIOT ARTS, INC.

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 17, 2025

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an enthusiastic and self-motivated community organization, Griot Arts Inc. This dynamic organization is composed of dedicated educators, artists, and community leaders who have tirelessly served the youth and citizens in the City of Clarksdale and Coahoma County, Mississippi.

Based in Clarksdale, MS, Griot Arts Inc. is commitment to nurturing creativity, empowering individuals and fostering strong sense of community belonging. The organization's focus lies in the arts education and workforce development—two powerful tools for creating a brighter and more equitable future. Griot Arts is more than an organization; it is a movement where every brushstroke, every melody, and every creative expression contributes to building a better tomorrow. Through its comprehensive arts education programs, Griot Arts inspires and cultivates the next generation of artists, equipping them with the skills and confidence to excel in their chosen fields and to make meaningful contributions to society. They believe that artistic expression is not only a personal outlet but also a powerful catalyst for community growth and positive change.

In addition to arts education, Griot Arts is deeply dedicated to workforce development. The organization recognizes the importance of preparing individuals for success in today's evolving job market. Through a variety of programs and initiatives, they provide participants with the tools, training, and opportunities needed to achieve economic stability and professional fulfillment.

Furthermore, Griot Arts demonstrates its commitment to community health and wellness

by hosting annual events during October's Breast Cancer Awareness Month, including the Zumba-A-Thon "Glow in the Dark," Sunset Yoga, and Boots & Boogie for the Cure at no charge. These events bring the community together in support of awareness, education, and hope.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Griot Arts, Inc. for their unwavering dedication and commitment to empowering youth through art, education, and workforce development continues to enrich the lives of the people of Clarksdale and Coahoma County, Mississippi.

CELEBRATING THE FIRST WOMAN
SENIOR PASTOR OF FIRST
MOUNT ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. EUGENE SIMON VINDMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 17, 2025

Mr. VINDMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a historic moment in our community—the installment of Rev. Dr. Sandra K. James as the first woman senior pastor in the history of First Mount Zion Baptist Church (FMZBC) located in Dumfries, Virginia.

Over twenty-five years ago, Rev. Dr. James began serving at FMZBC, one of the oldest churches in Prince William County. Before her leadership at the church, Rev. Dr. James served our Nation with honor in the United States Army for more than 24 years, retiring with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

After retiring from the U.S. Army, Rev. Dr. James continued her leadership and service to others as Assistant Pastor at FMZBC, where she provided guidance in preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and ministry development.

Rev. Dr. James is also a dedicated scholar of faith. She earned a Master's Degree in Theological Studies from Virginia Union University and later went on to earn a Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Studies and Ministry from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, which equipped her to serve others with wisdom and compassion.

In 2024, Rev. Dr. James made history when she was appointed Acting Pastor of FMZBC, leading the church with vision and grace. Today, she stands as the 11th Pastor of First Mount Zion Baptist Church, a milestone in the churches' 158-year history.

Mr. Speaker, I want to personally recognize Rev. Dr. James as she makes history as the first woman to pastor First Mount Zion Baptist Church, bringing a fresh vision to meet the challenges of today.

Founded in 1867 by formerly enslaved men and women determined to build a place of worship and community, FMZBC has stood as a symbol of faith and hope in Prince William County. I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating Rev. Dr. James and the entire First Mount Zion Baptist Church family as they enter this new and inspiring chapter in their church's history.