

Kriner's Diner in Anchorage, which he founded in 2010. The diner became well-known for its great food and its warm, welcoming environment, rooted in the values of family, friendship, and community. It is an honor to stand before you today and pay tribute to the legacy he left behind.

Mr. Kriner embodied true American values and integrity through his commitment to advocating for small businesses in the face of adversity and standing firm in the face of government overreach. Andy was a man who deeply understood the importance of giving back. Every year, he distributed more than 400 Thanksgiving dinners to anyone who came by his diner, with no questions asked. This annual tradition demonstrated his dedication to service and his commitment to standing up for what was right, making him a pillar of our Alaskan community.

Mr. Kriner is survived by his wife, Norann, of 45 years, as well as his three children and six grandchildren. His legacy will live on through the business he built, the family he cherished, and the community he enriched.

HONORING COLONEL ROBERT
BARTRAN

HON. TRENT KELLY

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 9, 2025

Mr. KELLY of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Colonel Robert Bartran's service, career, and accomplishments. For over 36 years, he served selflessly in the Mississippi Army National Guard.

After earning his commission in 1995 from the Officer's Candidate Course, he began a long and distinguished career. He holds an associate's degree from Hinds Community College, a bachelors degree from the University of Southern Mississippi, and a masters degree from Liberty University. His military education includes Basic Training, the Engineer Officers Basic and Advanced Courses, the Command and General Staff Officer Course, and many other military and civilian law enforcement schools, as well as courses in transportation, human resources, maintenance, and leadership.

He served at the platoon, company, battalion, major subordinate command, and state levels. Throughout his distinguished service, Colonel Bartran exhibited extraordinary vision, unwavering professionalism, dynamic leadership, and deep compassion. He served across the United States and around the world, including in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Afghanistan. His years of experience and training in law enforcement, border security, and criminal justice made him an invaluable asset to counterterrorism, counter-narcotics initiatives, and counterinsurgency operations. His exceptional management skills and profound concern for the well-being of all soldiers culminated in his role as the Director of the Mississippi National Guard Counterdrug Program.

Colonel Bartran's distinguished career is marked by his numerous awards and decorations, a testament to his exceptional service. Among his accolades are the Bronze Star Medal, seven Meritorious Service Medals, three Army Commendation Medals, the Iraq Campaign and Afghanistan Campaign Medals,

the Humanitarian Medal, and the Air Assault Badge, along with numerous other federal and state awards. These honors reflect his dedication and commitment to his duty, inspiring pride and honor in all who have served alongside him, including myself.

His commitment to his family, his service to our country, and his contributions to Mississippi are testaments to his character. Colonel Bartran is a true American hero, a proud Mississippian Guardsman, and a man for whom we are immensely grateful.

RECOGNIZING CHAFFEE COUNTY
COMMISSIONER GREG FELT

HON. BRITTANY PETERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 9, 2025

Ms. PETERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Greg Felt of Chaffee County, Colorado for his service to the people of Salida, Buena Vista, and Poncha Springs, on the Chaffee County Board of County Commissioners.

Commissioner Felt is a dedicated public servant who has served the people of Chaffee County for much of his life. He led the county's response to the Decker Fire and guided public health efforts as Board of Health Chair during the pandemic. He has spent his entire life on or around the Arkansas River and has gained a unique perspective on our natural resources. With his expertise, he served as the Director for both the Upper Arkansas and Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy Districts to help protect Colorado's Water and was appointed by Gov. Jared Polis to represent the Arkansas River Basin on the Colorado Water Conservation Board. Commissioner Felt created a lasting impact on the Arkansas River, and for Chaffee County, and his presence will be missed.

On behalf of the people of Colorado's Seventh Congressional District, it is my honor to congratulate Commissioner Felt for his time on the Chaffee County Board of County Commissioners and sincerely thank him for his contributions to the Colorado community. I wish him the best of luck in his future endeavors.

WISHING RANDY HAGEDORN A
HAPPY RETIREMENT

HON. MIKE FLOOD

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 9, 2025

Mr. FLOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate the remarkable career of one of Norfolk's most beloved community leaders, Randy Hagedorn, following four decades with the Norfolk Family YMCA.

Under Randy's leadership, the Norfolk Family YMCA experienced transformative growth. From leading an annual fundraiser that generates hundreds of thousands of dollars to support local scholarships and programs, to spearheading a successful \$13 million campaign for a major expansion in 2019, Randy's dedication has left a lasting impact on our community. These achievements have cemented the YMCA as a cornerstone of Nor-

folk's community life and serves as a model for excellence across Nebraska.

Randy's community engagement extends beyond the YMCA. For over 30 years, he has officiated football and basketball games, including NCAA events and NAIA national championships. His exemplary service earned him the prestigious 2024 NAIA Larry Lady Officiating Award.

As Randy steps into retirement, he leaves behind a thriving Norfolk Family YMCA with nearly 12,000 active members—a reflection of his vision, leadership, and dedication. His legacy will continue to shape our community for years to come.

On behalf of the people of the First District, I thank him for his service throughout his extraordinary career. It will have a big impact on our community for years to come. We wish him the best in his retirement as he begins this next chapter.

HONORING THE CAREER AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF MR. VERNATIUS
FRANK THOMSEN

**HON. AUMUA AMATA COLEMAN
RADEWAGEN**

OF AMERICAN SAMOA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 9, 2025

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the career and accomplishments of Mr. Vernatius Frank Thomsen. In June of 1986, Mr. Thomsen began his military career and enlisted in the U.S. Navy serving two tours on board the U.S. Sub-tender USS *Proteus* AS-19, and one tour on board the guided missile destroyer USS *Lynde McCormick* DDG-8 within the supply department and Master at Arms Division. He remained in the US Navy Reserve until August 1994. In May of 1998 he became the first USCG Reservist for American Samoa and served on active duty at the USCG Marine Safety Detachment (MSD), American Samoa until September of 2006. He continued his uniformed duties as a Reserve Maritime Enforcement, Senior Chief Petty Officer in the United States Coast Guard until his retirement in September 2018. In April 2007 Mr. Thomsen was hired as the Assistant Supervisor for the USCG Marine Safety Detachment. In November of 2011 he was designated as the Command Intelligence Officer for American Samoa, representing the Captain of the Port Sector Honolulu. From May 1998 to January 2025, Mr. Thomsen dedicated over 30 years of exceptional service to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), culminating in his role as Deputy Supervisor of the Marine Safety Unit (MSU) in American Samoa.

Throughout his tenure, he served as the backbone of continuity in a unit subject to annual personnel turnover, ensuring seamless operations and unwavering support to USCG missions. His steadfast leadership, technical expertise, and unyielding commitment to mission readiness have left an indelible impact on the maritime community of American Samoa. Mr. Thomsen's multifaceted duties encompassed training of incoming personnel, acting as a liaison with federal and state agencies, and serving as the operational leader in the absence of the Commanding Officer. His roles included conducting safety workshops with Federal and State agencies for the maritime

community, Marine Casualty Investigator, Commercial Fishing Vessel Examiner, Port State Control Officer, Foreign Tank Vessel Inspector, Explosive Handling Supervisor, Federal On-Scene Coordinator Representative, Pollution Investigator, Facility and Security Inspector, and Collateral Duty Intelligence Officer. He skillfully led and assisted numerous search and rescue missions, environmental protection operations, and vessel casualty responses, safeguarding lives, property, and the marine environment. His quick thinking and calm under pressure have saved dozens of lives and mitigated multiple disasters contributing immeasurable benefit to the overall health and safety of our beautiful islands. He has led multiple workshops and training programs to pass on his wide breadth of knowledge and prepare the next generation of maritime officers. His work in the community has also had a strong humanitarian benefit demonstrating strong Samoan cultural values of service and compassion.

Mr. Thomsen's personal military decorations are highlighted by two Coast Guard Commendation Medals, two Coast Guard Achievement Medals, four Coast Guard Commandant's Letter of Commendation, and eight Meritorious Coast Guard Team Awards. Mr. Thomsen's enduring contributions reflect his deep commitment to the Coast Guard's core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. His legacy is one of steadfast leadership, selfless service, and unwavering dedication to the safety and well-being of the maritime community in American Samoa and the surrounding islands. He will spend his well-deserved retirement with his wife, Denise Loretta Thomsen, his children, Vitoriao'a'ana and Frank III, and with the gratitude of the American Samoan people. His retirement ceremony will be held on January 14, 2025.

HONORING MIKE BYRNE

HON. CLIFF BENTZ

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 9, 2025

Mr. BENTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning along with Congressman LAMALFA to honor a constituent for his decades of selfless advocacy on behalf of his family, his community, and his fellow farmers and ranchers.

Throughout a life of tireless work on his family's legacy cattle ranch with origins reaching back to the founding decades of two states, Mike Byrne has gone above and beyond at home in the Klamath Basin and around the country to support his community and enhance the legacy created by his family.

Mr. Byrne's family first came to the Klamath Basin in the 1860's, developing large-scale ranching operations on hundreds of thousands of then unclaimed acres in Klamath County, Oregon, and Modoc County, California. The family has a personal relationship with the Klamath Project since its inception, as the initial holdings of Jesse Carr were taken via eminent domain by the federal government for the construction of the Clear Lake Reservoir after the Klamath Project was authorized in 1902. Remaining acres that once comprised the initial family holdings are still grazed seasonally as an integral part of the summer cattle operations under cooperative management with

the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Mike's grandfather W.C. Dalton moved the family from Clear Lake to the shore of the receding Tule Lake and was instrumental in building the D Canal to bring water from Klamath Lake to that area. Dalton sold virgin land to Czech immigrant families—many of whom still are farming—who cleared and planted the area as water was initially delivered and supported the founding of the town of Malin, Oregon.

Mike was born in 1951 to Bob and Betty Lou Byrne. He attended Newell Elementary School and, like all his siblings, was sent on a train at 13 years old to boarding school in California. While attending Bellarmine College Preparatory in San Jose, California, Mike met his wife Bev at a sophomore mixer. We'd like to congratulate the two on the 50th wedding anniversary they celebrated last year, and for their two grown children Matt and Brianna—each of whom have two grade school boys and help on the family ranch as well.

While attending University of California, Davis, Mike earned a degree in animal science and returned home to help on the ranch any chance he could. He moved home permanently in 1973 to work with his parents and siblings, with his years of school representing the only time he lived away from the ranch. At home, Mike's demonstration of leading by example on the ranch have garnered many treasured long-term employees; integral individuals he has supported and who have supported him for decades.

Mike was happy working the ranch, but in the early 1980's, at the urging of family friend and ranching industry leader Rob Flournoy, Mike was encouraged to pursue what became decades of involvement, volunteerism and support for the agricultural community on three key fronts: supporting agricultural water supply and rights, sustaining public lands grazing and supporting conservation as part of a working agricultural business.

Mike initially became involved in the Modoc County Cattlemen's Association, volunteered heavily, moved through all the officer chairs and was named Cattleman of the Year in 1992. He continued his advocacy at the California Cattlemen's Association, serving as public lands committee chairman (a position he likely held for longer than any other in the organization's history) and Second Vice President from 1989 through 1991. He was also a long-time President of the California Public Lands Council. Balancing his volunteer work with daily needs on the ranch—including the fact that his father was confined to a wheelchair—Mike chose not to accept the offer to move up further in the organization at the time but remained heavily involved.

Mike was exceptionally involved in the fallout from the galvanizing 2001 Klamath water shut off. That event set off a frenzy of activity in the community and Mike participated meaningfully and wholeheartedly, taking dozens of trips to Washington, D.C.—where he was on a first name basis with multiple cabinet secretaries and influenced countless staffers of all political stripes with his unique, disarming sense of humor, participating in countless tours and hearings with federal officials and the media and acting as a principal organizer of The Klamath Bucket Brigade. Mike knew the efforts made by so many at that time were significant and meaningful and he was honored to play a role.

In addition to his role as an advocate during the water shut off, Mike was deeply involved closer to home as Chairman of the Lava Beds Resource Conservation District, which helped to quickly and efficiently distribute relief funding to a reeling local farming community that was suddenly not sure if they would ever farm again. Fortunately, the water has come back on, but, unfortunately, efforts to secure real certainty for the community continue to this day.

He later became deeply involved in the National Cattleman's Beef Association, where he ascended to a national position as Policy Chairman in 2004, and the national Public Lands Council, where he served as President from 2004 to 2006. From those national positions he represented cattle producers in all 50 states, but he always kept his eye on the West and his heart in the Basin.

In addition to leadership roles and meetings, the Byrne family has spent many days in the field demonstrating conservation leadership. Mike and his brother Dan were recognized with the National Resources Conservation Service's nationwide Excellence in Conservation Award in 2004 and the Society for Range Management with the Excellence in Range Management award in 1998. They were also featured in two editions of the conservation ranching publication, *Grazing for Change*. Mike was proud to participate not for personal accolades, but to demonstrate to a wide range of stakeholders the positive possibilities of successful working landscape management and wildlife. Along those lines, he was also very proud of his role in relocating and releasing breeding pairs of sage grouse from Nevada to lekking areas near the original family headquarters that are still grazed annually by the Byrne family.

Mike continues to selflessly attribute the success of his efforts to being blessed with the right history, the right connections, and being in the right place at the right time. Fair enough, but then we can all count ourselves lucky that he took advantage.

While we see hundreds of committed advocates in my office each year, there are two things that make Mike unique.

First is the longevity and breadth of his service. While many people join a single organization and pass through leadership then retire, Mike's willingness to remain involved in multiple organizations providing counsel and support after his term as leader has ended is truly remarkable. He remains Chairman of the local RCD and has just recently completed many terms as board member at the Klamath Water Users Association and the Public Lands Council.

Second is his willingness to stand back from the limelight and deflect credit to others at all times while maintaining consistently good, or if you know Mike very well, you might say great humor—even if you don't quite get it. By being willing to work hard and support the community in bringing diverse groups together without caring who got the credit, Mike followed one of former President Ronald Reagan's political rules and was able to accomplish much.

We thank Mike for his many efforts and his continued support to this day and we stand with the community in saying we appreciate what he has done and thank him for what he continues to do.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to share with my colleagues and the Nation, my regard for an outstanding American.