

RECOGNIZING DIANE REITZ: A LIGHT OF SERVICE, A HEART OF STRENGTH, AND A LEGACY OF HONOR

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 21, 2025

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary woman, a true pillar of our community, whose life has been defined by service, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to others—Diane Reitz.

Even as she wages a courageous battle against stage IV pancreatic cancer, Diane continues to give of herself—to her family, her neighbors, her country, and, above all, to the veterans of Bucks County and Southeast Pennsylvania. She is not simply enduring—she is inspiring.

Diane was born in Philadelphia but found her true home in Levittown, where she has lived for 64 years on the very same street—Rocky Pool Lane. It was there that she grew up, raised a family, and built a life of meaning and service. She graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School and went on to become a registered nurse, earning degrees from Philadelphia University and Gwynedd Mercy University. But while her education equipped her with knowledge, it was her heart that made her a healer.

For 56 years, Diane has been the devoted wife of Ronald “Ron” Reitz, an Army veteran and longtime barber. Together, they raised two children, Cheryl and Joan, who, in turn, blessed them with five grandchildren: Emma, Anne, Raegan, Cassidy, and Quinn. But Diane’s sense of duty has never stopped at her own front door.

Service is not just something Diane does—it is the essence of who she is. A pillar of our community, she has led Girl Scout troops, inspired others as a Zumba instructor, and spearheaded efforts that have uplifted countless lives. She raised over \$50,000 for the American Heart Association’s “Go Red for Women” campaign, ensuring critical support for those in need. She has honored our nation’s heroes by organizing reunions for the 75th Ranger Regiment and playing a key role in the 50th Anniversary commemoration of the end of the Vietnam war, ensuring their sacrifices are never forgotten.

But Diane’s impact is more than the sum of her efforts—it is felt in the lives she touches. She offers belonging to the overlooked, purpose to the uncertain, and hope to those in need. She steps forward when others step back, embodying the very spirit of service and reminding us all what it truly means to give of oneself.

Yet, it is her work with our veterans that stands as the most profound expression of her dedication. Recognizing the crisis of veteran suicide, Diane took action. She joined forces with Vietnam war hero Captain David A. Christian to establish Victor Six Health and Fitness, an innovative program designed to combat the mental and emotional struggles afflicting so many of our returning servicemembers.

Drawing upon groundbreaking research from institutions such as Johns Hopkins, the Cleveland Clinic, and Mount Sinai Hospital, Diane developed a 12-week program focused on the critical link between physical fitness

and cognitive health. The impact has been extraordinary: veterans struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI) have not only regained their strength but have rebuilt their lives—finding employment, reconnecting with their families, and reclaiming their sense of purpose. And perhaps most notably, since its inception, not a single veteran who has completed the Victor Six program has taken their own life. Veterans travel hours each way to participate in Diane’s program, not simply because of the results, but because they know that behind it stands a woman who believes in them, fights for them, and refuses to give up on them.

Her work has been recognized with commendations from the United States Army and the United States Marine Corps, but her greatest honor is reflected in the lives she has transformed. I have seen firsthand the strength and camaraderie her program fosters—veterans standing shoulder to shoulder, forging a path forward with renewed hope and dignity.

Mr. Speaker, Diane Reitz embodies the highest ideals of duty, honor, and country. Her story is a powerful reminder that one person, armed with conviction and compassion, can change the world.

RECOGNIZING EULESS, TEXAS
PUBLIC SERVICE OFFICER RUSSELL CARTER

HON. BETH VAN DUYNE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 21, 2025

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Euleless Public Service Officer Russell Carter for his 25 years of dedicated service to North Texas. A proud graduate of Haltom High School, he furthered his education in criminology and criminal justice through coursework at Tarrant County College and Columbia College.

Mr. Carter began his career in warehouse operations and security at Atlantic Air in Richland Hills and Pinkerton Security at the General Motors plant in Arlington. He joined the City of Euleless in 2000, where his contributions have earned him multiple recognitions, including the 2006 Civilian of the Year Award and 2011 October Employee of the Month. His commitment to excellence was evident by his role in tactical training exercises and assisting in the development of new jail FTO/training manual and Bond Procedures manual.

A dedicated member of the Euleless Police Officers Association, Mr. Carter also volunteers with a charity BBQ team, participating in competitions, and supporting local causes. In his personal time, he enjoys fishing, hunting, and cherishing moments with his family.

Mr. Carter’s professionalism, service, and community involvement made a lasting impact on Euleless. I thank him for his contributions to North Texas and wish him the best in his well-deserved retirement.

HONORING RETIRING LIBERTY
COUNTY MANAGER JOEY BROWN

HON. EARL L. “BUDDY” CARTER

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 21, 2025

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Joseph “Joey” Brown for his outstanding service and dedication to Liberty County. Since his appointment as County Administrator in 1992, Joey has worked tirelessly to ensure the smooth operation of the county government, overseeing budgets, capital projects, and essential services that impact the lives of every resident.

A lifelong member of the Liberty County community, Joey and his wife, Kim, have dedicated themselves not only to public service but also to their faith and family. They are active members of the First United Methodist Church and the proud parents of two adult children.

His leadership extends beyond the county, serving on the Liberty County YMCA Board and as Southeast District Director of the Georgia City and County Manager’s Association.

Joey Brown’s commitment to Liberty County is an example of true public service, and today, I thank him for his decades of dedication to the people of Georgia’s First District.

HONORING DR. CORDELLA SHEGOG
SMITH

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 21, 2025

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Dr. Cordella Shegog Smith.

Born and raised in Pope, Mississippi, Dr. Smith was nurtured by her single mother, Reba Shegog, in a home filled with love, alongside her grandparents, five siblings, an uncle, and a cousin. She dedicated her career to education and service, retiring as the Center Director of the Finch-Henry Job Corps Center in Batesville, Mississippi. Named after former Governor Cliff Finch and State Representative Dr. Aaron E. Henry, the center flourished under Dr. Smith’s leadership, ranking in the top 10 percent nationwide in student academics, vocational training, and job placement.

After 41 years of service, Dr. Smith retired in July 2022 but quickly answered another calling—teaching. She joined the South Panola School District as a special education teacher at South Panola High School, where she was honored as “Teacher of the Month” in her third month.

A proud graduate of South Panola High School, Dr. Smith pursued higher education at Livingstone College, supported by a scholarship from the West Tennessee and Mississippi Women’s Home and Overseas Society. She credits the church women in her community for recognizing and encouraging her potential. After earning a Bachelor of Social Work degree, she returned to Pope and began her career as the Social Director at Batesville Manor Nursing Home. She later served as a social worker for the South Panola School District and Finch-Henry Job Corps.

Dr. Smith's dedication to lifelong learning led her to the University of Mississippi, where she earned multiple degrees: a Master of Education in Educational Psychology (1993), a Master in Curriculum & Instruction (1995), a Master of Arts in Higher Education (1998), and a Specialist Degree in Higher Education (2021). Additionally, through a co-program with the University of Carolina, she obtained a Doctorate in Christian Counseling Psychology and is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Educational Leadership at Bellhaven University.

During her tenure at Finch-Henry, Dr. Smith forged partnerships with Quitman, Desoto, and North Panola School Districts, expanding vocational training opportunities for students.

Beyond her professional career, Dr. Smith is an accomplished writer. Her article, *The Smells of Christmas*, was featured in *Batesville Magazine*, and she has also been highlighted in *Delta Magazine* and *Mahogany*. She has completed a manuscript for her book, *Things Remembered, Lessons Learned*, which she anticipates publishing this year.

Dr. Smith is deeply committed to her community, living by the motto: "I stand in the shadows and push others into the light." She actively supports local Breast Cancer Awareness initiatives, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and her family's project, *Wrapped in Warmth*. Inspired by her nephew's victorious battle against cancer, her family annually collects snacks and blankets for patients at the West Cancer Clinic in Memphis, Tennessee, and Baptist Memorial Hospital in Oxford, Mississippi.

Her dedication extends through numerous organizations, including Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the Panola County Foster Care Review Board, the Panola County NAACP, the West Tennessee and Mississippi Women's Home and Overseas Society, the Assembly of Christian Educators, and IVETA. She is also a Certified Licensed Social Worker (LSW), serving her community with unwavering passion.

Dr. Smith is a devoted member of Pope Chapel AME Zion Church. She is the loving wife of Jessie Smith, Jr., a proud mother to Jordan and Sky Smith, and a cherished grandmother to Dylan and Eli Smith.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Dr. Cordella Shegog Smith for her dedication to serving this great state and country.

CELEBRATING CSD VIKINGS BOYS' BASKETBALL TEAM BECOMING THE MARYLAND 1A STATE CHAMPIONS FOR THE 2024-25 SEASON

HON. ANDY HARRIS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 21, 2025

Mr. HARRIS of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to recognize the Cambridge-South Dorchester Vikings Boys' Basketball Team on becoming the Maryland 1A State Champions for the 2024–2025 season.

On March 14, 2025, the Vikings secured a thrilling 36–33 overtime victory against The SEED School at the University of Maryland's Xfinity Center, marking their first state title since 1996.

The Vikings demonstrated exceptional skill and determination throughout their championship run, finishing the season with an impressive 26–2 overall record. Their path to the championship included hard-fought victories over Pocomoke, Snow Hill, and Fort Hill in the playoffs.

In the state final, senior guard Sterling Perkins made the game-winning shot with just 0.4 seconds left in overtime. Koby Ennals led the team with 16 points, while Perkins contributed 15 points, 6 rebounds, and 3 steals.

Head Coach Sean Tucker's leadership was instrumental in guiding the team to this historic achievement. His message to the team going into overtime: All you have to do is win by one, exemplifies the Vikings' grit and determination.

This championship is not just a victory for the team, but for the entire Cambridge-South Dorchester community. It serves as an inspiration to future generations of student-athletes and showcases the power of perseverance and teamwork.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the CSD Vikings Boys' Basketball Team for their outstanding accomplishment. Their dedication, sportsmanship, and resilience in capturing the Maryland 1A State Championship have brought pride to their school, their families, and the entire Eastern Shore of Maryland.

I thank them for making us proud.

SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF APRIL 2025 AS NATIONAL NATIVE PLANT MONTH

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 21, 2025

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to invite my House colleagues to join Congressman Joe Neguse of Colorado and me in recognizing the critical importance of the native plants of our country by cosponsoring our resolution designating the month of April as Native Plant Month.

Native plants are not just a vital part of our natural landscape; they are integral to the environmental health of our Nation. From supporting biodiversity to enhancing local ecosystems, native plants play a crucial role in promoting sustainability and resilience in our environment. They provide critical habitats for wildlife, including pollinators like bees and butterflies, which are essential for agricultural productivity. They also help reduce our reliance on chemical fertilizers and pesticides, prevent soil erosion and improve water quality. Beyond their environmental benefits, native plants are foundational to the cultural heritage of many indigenous communities, who have long depended on these plants for food, medicine, shelter and spiritual practices.

In my home state of Hawaii, our *kuleana* (responsibility) is to care for over 1,400 native plant species, nearly 90 percent of which are endemic, meaning they are found nowhere else on Earth. These plants are not only critical to the islands' biodiversity but also serve as living treasures that reflect the resilience and adaptation of life in an isolated, often harsh environment. The plants that thrive in Hawaii's diverse ecosystems—ranging from

rainforests and drylands to volcanic craters and coastal areas—have adapted in remarkable ways to the unique conditions of the islands. They play an essential role in maintaining the delicate balance of these ecosystems, providing food, shelter and crucial support for the diverse wildlife that depends on them, such as native birds, insects and other species that are also found nowhere else in the world.

Beyond their ecological value, native plants in Hawaii hold profound cultural and historical significance for Native Hawaiian communities. For centuries, Hawaiians have relied on these plants for a variety of essential purposes, including as staple foods like taro (*kalo*) and breadfruit (*'ulu*), which were central to their diet and agricultural system. These plants also provided medicinal benefits, with species like *'a'ali'i* (hophbush) and *māmaki* (*pipturus*) integral to the holistic health practices of Native Hawaiians. Additionally, many plants were used to create tools, clothing and materials for daily life. The fibers of *hala* (*pandanus*) and *kī* (*cordyline*) were woven into mats, baskets and garments, while the wood of native trees like *koa* was essential for building canoes and homes. These practices reflect the deep, sustainable connection that Native Hawaiians have long had with their land, or *'āina*, underscoring the importance of preserving these plants for both ecological and cultural continuity.

However, the survival of these plants is increasingly threatened by invasive species, habitat destruction and the shifting environmental conditions brought on by climate change. The native flora of Hawaii and other parts of our Nation face constant pressure from non-native plants that crowd out indigenous species, diminishing the richness of our ecosystems. Additionally, extreme weather events, rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall patterns continue to jeopardize the health and viability of these plants.

If we are to preserve the irreplaceable native plants that have evolved over millennia, it is critical that we take action to protect them. Recognizing April as Native Plant Month will not only provide an opportunity to celebrate the diverse and invaluable plants across our country but also help raise awareness about the challenges they face. By designating this month, we can shine a spotlight on the importance of native plants in maintaining the ecological balance of our communities and encourage the public to take steps to protect and conserve these species.

As we face the ongoing challenges of habitat loss and invasive species, it is more important than ever that we recognize the role that native plants play in sustaining the health of our ecosystems. We must act now to raise awareness, promote conservation efforts and educate future generations about the importance of preserving these plants for the benefit of our Nation's biodiversity and cultural heritage.

I encourage all my colleagues to support this important initiative. Mr. Speaker, I ask for your cosponsorship of this resolution and for your partnership in raising awareness about the conservation and appreciation of native plants across our great Nation. Together, we can make a lasting difference.