

above herself, and trailblazer spirit make her a worthy recipient of a Congressional Veteran Commendation.

RECOGNIZING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE NINTH DISTRICT CONGRESSIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL

**HON. LISA C. McCLAIN**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2025*

Mrs. McCLAIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an exceptional group of young students who have worked with my staff and me to better their civic engagement and understanding of the federal government. This year's Congressional Youth Council consists of some of the brightest and most dedicated young minds from throughout the Thumb of Michigan.

These young leaders have remained committed to regular meetings, coming together to immerse themselves in the legislative process on a non-partisan, academic basis. Throughout their time in the program, these students have studied legislation, prepared mock bills, and worked to better understand critical issues that impact their communities and countless families across the country. It is incredible how in-depth and thorough their work has been. This determined group of students has demonstrated an incredible wealth of knowledge of our democratic system, its key challenges, and what is to come in the future.

Mr. Speaker, as policymakers, we would be wise to take notes from this generation of promising young leaders. I ask all my colleagues to join me in commending Michigan's Ninth District Congressional Youth Council for their outstanding performance this year. These students, along with their families and those in their lives who support them, should be incredibly proud of the work they have done.

CELEBRATING MRS. ODESSA BOWIE'S 111 YEARS OF LIFE

**HON. JASMINE CROCKETT**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2025*

Ms. CROCKETT. Mr. Speaker, it is with great joy and honor that we celebrate Odessa Bowie's 111th birthday. I would like to celebrate her life and the impact she has had on others. A milestone that many people can only hope to reach one day. May we acknowledge this day and hope that this celebration be filled with love, joy, and gratitude as she celebrates alongside those most important.

The life of Mrs. Odessa Bowie has had an immeasurable impact on those around her. As a mother and grandmother, she has extended love and kindness to her children and grandchildren. Instilling in them the value and importance of hard work, compassion, and grace for others. She has never hesitated to provide a system of support for those in her life or help them in a time of need. When one has experienced the many seasons of life and all that it brings to us, it can be easy to harden our hearts and lose faith, but Mrs. Bowie never

has. She has remained a steadfast believer and a faithful attendant of St. Paul United Methodist Church. The faith she has carried throughout her life is one reflected in the character she possesses.

Mrs. Bowie has been a pillar in her community, and we hope that her legacy is an inspiration to others to always be of service to others with a gracious heart and humility.

HONORING MR. EDDIE COTTON, JR.

**HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2025*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a torchbearer of the blues tradition, Mr. Eddie Cotton, Jr. Mr. Cotton exemplifies what can be achieved through hard work, dedication, and a desire to achieve success.

Bluesman Eddie Cotton, Jr.'s music is rooted in the church. His father was a Pentecostal minister, shepherding the Christ Chapel Church of God in Christ, which he founded in Clinton, Mississippi, just west of Jackson. While music was central to church services, both his family and his congregation shunned secular music. Still, Cotton reflects, "The deepest of the blues I've ever played is in church. . . . The style they play on is nothing but blues." When he was six, his father bought him his first electric guitar, and by age eight, the younger Cotton was an official member of the church band, eventually becoming the lead guitarist. At 18, he earned a full scholarship to study music theory at Jackson State University, where he learned music theory and discovered that the basic structures of blues were ingrained in his playing. After college, he became the minister of music at the family church while simultaneously playing with Mississippi bluesman King Edward Antoine, known in Jackson as "The Blues Picking King."

Cotton is a master of a genre called soul blues. Emerging in the 1960s, soul blues fuses the gritty guitar sound central to blues with the smoother, gospel-influenced vocal style of soul and R&B music. Soul blues is music meant to move the body and spirit, which is why Cotton describes his sound as "hard-driving blues" or "juke joint blues." Eddie's musical career remains focused on two things: regular gigs for enthusiastic soul blues audiences and a continuing commitment to his home church in Clinton, where he serves as both church administrator and minister of music. Whatever the venue, Cotton's goal is always to find what his church calls "the pocket," a place of spiritual transcendence where "the music just pulsates in everybody's mind and heart."

Now in his 50's, Eddie Cotton, Jr. is a blues master with a growing international fan base. He has opened for legends like Ike Turner and B.B. King, and in 2015, he took top honors at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis. Eddie Cotton performed at the Richmond Folk Festival in 2017 and is among the favorites returning to celebrate the festival's 20th anniversary. He released his latest album, *The Mirror*, in March of 2024, just days after an electrifying set at the SXSW Festival in Austin, Texas. In July of 2024, he traveled to Las

Vegas to perform at the National NAACP Convention, where he has frequently performed for the gathering's Mississippi Catfish and Blues Night over the past 15 years. Recently, Eddie received the 2025 Governor's Arts Award for Excellence in Music. Among his awards and accolades, he has a Mississippi Blues Trail marker in his hometown of Clinton.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Eddie Cotton, Jr. for his passion and unwavering dedication to the art of music.

SALUTING THE SERVICE OF MASTER SERGEANT DUANE C. BYGUM, JR.

**HON. JOHN R. CARTER**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2025*

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to award Master Sergeant Duane C. Bygum, Jr., USMC and USAF, Retired, with a Congressional Veteran Commendation. His unwavering commitment to our country and community is a shining example of honor and duty.

During his 32 years of military service, MSgt Bygum served in both the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Air Force in various roles including Law Enforcement, Security Operation, and Emergency Management. During his four years in the Marine Corps, he served as an Infantry Corporal in Subic Bay, Philippines.

Upon transitioning to the Air Force, MSgt Bygum served under the Secretary of the Air Force Director, Security, Counterintelligence and Special Program Oversight (SAF/AAZ). There he implemented the first Biometric Identification Fingerprint System, significantly enhancing the use of technology to expedite time-critical and sensitive data for the Department of Defense and the Air Force.

Throughout his service, MSgt Bygum participated in Operation Northern Watch and Operation Enduring Freedom, and supported recovery efforts following the 9/11 attacks. He was awarded over 30 Military medals, awards and commendations including the Meritorious Service Medal.

After retiring from active service, MSgt Bygum's duty to his fellow servicemembers and community did not end. He currently serves as an Associate Professor of Homeland Security and Emergency Management at National University. Additionally, he helped establish the Disaster Recovery International Military Mentorship Program, which provides transitioning veterans with training, mentorship, resume writing assistance, job placement, and skill-building opportunities, helping them smoothly transition into private and governmental sectors.

MSgt Bygum's unwavering dedication and service to his Nation exemplify why he deserves this honor. I commend his remarkable contributions and extend my best wishes for his continued success as a steadfast advocate for our service members and veterans.

HONORING A.J. SLATER, CARNEGIE MEDAL RECIPIENT FROM LAKE-LAND, FLORIDA

**HON. SCOTT FRANKLIN**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2025*

Mr. SCOTT FRANKLIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a true hero from my hometown of Lakeland, Florida. Mr. A.J. Slater was awarded the Carnegie Medal, North America's highest civilian honor for heroism.

In November, Mr. Slater came upon the horrific scene of a fiery crash along the shores of Lake Parker. Without hesitation, and with no regard for his own safety, he rushed toward a burning vehicle where two small children were trapped inside. He heard a mother's desperate cries—"Save my kids!"—and immediately jumped into action.

Mr. Slater pulled 3-year-old Walker Willis from the flames, saving his life. In a second, selfless attempt, he returned for Walker's sister, 5-year-old JoLynn. Tragically, the flames and smoke overwhelmed the vehicle before he could free her. For his heroic actions, Mr. Slater suffered severe burns, underwent multiple surgeries, and now carries both the physical and emotional scars of that day.

Though the pain of loss remains, his courage has inspired our community. His humility is just as powerful as his bravery. In his words, "To receive this medal is a wonderful feeling—but still a reminder of JoLynn." Mr. Slater never sought recognition—only to make his parents, his friends, and his community proud.

A.J. Slater represents the very best of us. In a moment when seconds mattered, he chose to run toward danger—saving a child's life and forever impacting a grieving family. As the first known recipient of the Carnegie Medal from Polk County, Mr. Slater now joins the ranks of those who have put the lives of others above their own in a time of great need.

Let his story be a beacon of hope reminding us of the extraordinary courage that can exist in everyday people. Today, we honor A.J. Slater—not just for his heroism, but for his humanity.

HONORING NORTH CROWLEY HIGH SCHOOL'S FOOTBALL TEAM FOR WINNING TEXAS' 6A DIVISION 1 STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

**HON. CRAIG A. GOLDMAN**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2025*

Mr. GOLDMAN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor North Crowley High School's football team for winning the 2024 Texas' 6A Division 1 State Championship. The Panthers dominated in the final, amassing 640 yards of total offense and defeating Austin Westlake 50–21 to cap off a perfect 16–0 season. This victory marked the second state championship in program history and the first for the City of Fort Worth in 21 years. The team's outstanding performance earned them a number three ranking in the Nation.

North Crowley's excellence was evident throughout the season. They began with a vic-

tory over nationally ranked DeSoto and later defeated Duncanville in the state semifinals. Their success extended beyond team accomplishments and high-profile matchups, with several standout individual performances. Wide receiver Quentin Gibson was named the 2024 MaxPreps National High School Football Player of the Year and was named the Offensive MVP for the championship game. Quarterback Chris Jimerson, Jr. and running back Cornelius Warren also had stellar seasons and will continue their careers at the Division 1 level next year. Additionally, Head Coach Ray Gates was recognized as the 2024 MaxPreps National High School Football Coach of the Year.

On behalf of the 12th Congressional District of Texas, I am proud to recognize the North Crowley High School Football Team for its remarkable season. Their undefeated record and numerous accolades are a testament to their dedication, talent, and hard work. Under Coach Gates's leadership, I have no doubt this program will continue to excel—not just in Texas, but on the national stage.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF ROSIE CARTER ROSS

**HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2025*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and service of a remarkable, professional and kind individual, Rosie Carter Ross, who for decades, has been a steadfast pillar of strength, compassion, and leadership.

Rosie Carter Ross was born on February 5, 1920, on a farm in Redwood, Mississippi. She is the daughter of Annie Jefferson and Green Carter. Her heritage is a rich blend of cultures—her mother's side has Jamaican and French Creole roots, while her father is of Choctaw and French Creole descent. Throughout her life, Rosie has witnessed the world change in ways few can imagine, yet her principles have remained steadfast, rooted in faith and a deep respect for her elders.

She attended Cherry Street Elementary School in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Her thirst for knowledge, love for education, and aptitude for learning led her to Louisiana, where she studied dance, and later to Rust College, continuing her academic journey. Her involvement in the church played a pivotal role in shaping her life. A lifelong Baptist, she has devoted herself to the Rock of Ages Church in Shaw, where she faithfully served as the choir director and a Sunday school teacher. She was instrumental in commissioning seven churches and served as the spokesperson for the Bolivar County Association, traveling across Bolivar, Washington, and Warren counties.

Rosie, affectionately called "Grandma Love," has lived a life full of love, resilience, wisdom, and grace, inspiring all who have had the privilege of knowing her. Her unwavering dedication to her family, community, Christian faith, and friends has left an indelible mark on the hearts of all who have been touched by her presence. Throughout her 105 years, Rosie has witnessed history unfold, contributed her talents, and remained a beacon of strength, compassion, and kindness. Her en-

during vitality and positive spirit continue to inspire others to cherish the blessings of life, embrace each moment, and face every challenge with courage and optimism.

Her longevity is not merely the result of genetics or diet—it is a reflection of her obedience and wisdom. She credits the elders of her youth for instilling values that shaped her character. Rosie always preferred the company of older individuals, learning from them how to live and grow into the intelligent woman she is today. As her legacy continues through her family, she encourages them to live a Christian and spiritual life guided by God and to never forget the importance of the House of God.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the life and legacy of Mrs. Rosie Carter Ross for her dedication, unwavering commitment to service, and her contributions to local communities throughout the Mississippi Delta.

SALUTING THE SERVICE OF COLONEL GARRY PATTERSON

**HON. JOHN R. CARTER**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2025*

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I proudly present Colonel Garry Patterson, U.S. Army, Retired, with a Congressional Veteran Commendation. A "Soldier for Life," COL Patterson embodies the values of selfless service and true leadership.

From 1972 to 2003, COL Patterson had an extraordinary 31-year career serving our Nation in the U.S. Army, holding numerous leadership positions across every level. As Chief of Staff for the 49th Armored Division, he played a pivotal role in preparing the unit for deployment in support of peacekeeping operations in war-torn Bosnia. Once deployed, he assumed the role of Chief of Staff for the Multi-National Division (North), leading a diverse team of officers from over ten nations, including Russia, Turkey, and Norway.

COL Patterson's distinguished military service earned him numerous accolades, including the Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, the Army Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster, and the Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters. He is also a recipient of the prestigious De Fleury Medal and has been inducted into the Order of St. George, underscoring his outstanding contributions to both the Army and his country.

After retirement from the Army, COL Patterson continued serving his community and the Nation. He leveraged his expertise to improve efficiency while working with several U.S. Defense Contractors. In partnership with the University of Texas and the US Army, COL Patterson assisted soldiers in obtaining the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification, impacting the lives of more than 800 students. He serves on the Round Rock Chamber of Commerce Defense Advisory Task Force Committee and is the current Chapter President of The AUSA Executive Committee of the Texas Capital Area.

It is with great appreciation that I award COL Patterson with the Congressional Veteran Commendation. I join his family, friends, and colleagues in recognizing his profound contributions to Texas and to our Nation.