

love for his family and his commitment to those around him left a lasting impact on all who knew him. Mr. Rowser believed deeply in the importance of family, and he worked tirelessly to create a life full of love, faith, and cherished moments. His strength, kindness, and dedication will always be remembered, and his legacy will continue to inspire all those whose lives he touched.

HONORING RABBI DAVID
STEINHARDT

HON. LOIS FRANKEL

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 3, 2025

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Rabbi David Steinhardt, a distinguished spiritual leader and educator, as he prepares to retire after more than three decades of dedicated service to B'nai Torah Congregation in Boca Raton, Florida. Rabbi Steinhardt's journey to the rabbinate was shaped by his early experiences as the child of refugees from Nazi Germany and his deep connection to the Conservative Jewish movement, cultivated at Camp Ramah and Congregation Rodeph Sholom in Connecticut.

Ordained in 1982 at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, Rabbi Steinhardt began his rabbinical career in Ohio before joining B'nai Torah in 1994, where he has since become a transformative figure. His proudest accomplishments include revitalizing the synagogue's religious after-school program, which saw attendance soar from under 40 percent to over 85 percent, and overseeing over 1,000 bar and bat mitzvahs. His congregants noted that in his congregation of 1,300 families, Rabbi Steinhardt has made it a point to connect deeply with them, even knowing them all by name. Under his leadership, the synagogue grew significantly, expanding both its staff and its reach in the Boca Raton community.

Rabbi Steinhardt's commitment to Jewish education and community service has left a lasting legacy. As he transitions to "rabbi emeritus," he will continue to contribute to his congregation and community, while embracing a busy retirement filled with teaching, writing, meditation, and time spent with his family.

It is a privilege to recognize Rabbi Steinhardt today, and I wish him a fulfilling and rewarding retirement, and continued success.

RECOGNIZING GERALDINE F.
THOMPSON'S SERVICE TO THE
GREAT STATE OF FLORIDA

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 3, 2025

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, Geraldine F. Thompson was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, and grew up in the South Dade town of Perrine, Florida, where members of her

family worked in agriculture and construction. She was married to the Honorable Emerson R. Thompson, Jr. She was the mother of three children—Laurise, Emerson III, and Elizabeth—and the proud grandmother of six granddaughters and one great-grandson. She enjoyed reading, writing, volunteering, and traveling.

She attended Miami Dade Community College. After receiving a scholarship to the University of Miami, she received an undergraduate degree in 1970 and a Master of Science from Florida State University in 1973. Geraldine F. Thompson served for six years as an Orange County Public Schools teacher. She later served for 24 years as an administrator at Valencia Community College, where she established the College Reach Out Program, which enabled thousands of low-income and disadvantaged students to fulfill their dream of going to college.

Senator Thompson developed a reputation as a respected local historian for compiling the history of African Americans in Central Florida and authoring the book "Black America: Orlando, Florida." She developed a passion for the history of African Americans in Central Florida. She wrote a play based on her book called "A Vote a Voice."

Her passion led her to preserve one of Orlando's unique landmarks, the Wells' Built Hotel. During the days of segregation, it provided lodging to some of America's most prominent citizens, including Justice Thurgood Marshall, Ray Charles, and performers on the chitlin circuit. Today, that landmark is known as the Wells' Built Museum of African American History and Culture.

She served in the Florida House of Representatives from 2006 to 2012 and 2018 to 2022. She was elected to the Florida Senate in 2012 and served until 2016, and she was serving as the senator of Senate District 15 in Orlando at the time of her death. Significant legislation that she initiated and passed included bills to exonerate the Groveland Four, provide compensation to James Joseph Richardson, who was wrongfully incarcerated for 22 years, outlaw discrimination against pregnant women in the workplace, and a Specialty License Plate to benefit organizations that comprise the Divine Nine with 85 percent of the proceeds from the sale of the plate benefiting the organizations to support scholarships.

Career highlights, honors, and awards include: Having roads designated for Bob Billingslea, July Perry, Edna Hargrett, and Bessie Coleman; Resolution for George Starke and exoneration of the Groveland Four; Recipient of the 2022–2023 Humanitarian Award from the Orlando International Film Festival; 2021 Civil Rights Hall of Fame from City of Orlando 2022; Outstanding Public Official Award from Healthy Start Coalition of Orange County; 2019 MLK Humanitarian Award from Central Florida Steppers; 2022 Warrior for Democracy Award from The League of Women's Voters; 2022 Mountain Top Trailblazer Award from Cultured Pearls of Alpha Kappa Alpha; 2018 Drum Major Social Justice Award from Alpha Pi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.; 2016 Legislative Advocacy Award from Democratic Women's Club of Florida Inc.; 2013 Mary Hatwood Human and Civil Rights Award from the National Education Association; 2012

Martin Luther King Jr. Achievement Award from Inter-Civic Council of the Southern Christian Leadership Council; 1996 Commitment to Excellence Award from Mid-Florida Chapter of NFBPA; 1992 Summit Award from the Women's Source Center; and Life Time Achievement Award from the Metropolitan Orlando Urban League.

REMEMBERING MR. JOHN
BERNARD OWENS

HON. TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 3, 2025

Mr. KENNEDY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Mr. John Bernard Owens, affectionately known as "Gadget," a beloved father, grandfather, and community member whose legacy of love, generosity, and devotion to his family will continue to inspire all who knew him.

Born on January 15, 1938, in Buffalo, New York, to the late John and Mary (Blount) Owens, Mr. Owens was one of eight children. He graduated from the Lackawanna School District, after which he spent over 30 years in the industrial industry, eventually retiring from the Buffalo Brake Beam Steel Company.

Mr. Owens was an active member of the Greater Love Fellowship of Buffalo under the leadership of Elder George Herring. His deep faith and commitment to his community were always evident. Anyone who knew Mr. Owens knew he had many passions. He was a devoted family man, and to him, "family was everything." He was known for his generosity, always giving and helping others in need. His love for his family and his desire to be there for others left a lasting impact on all who crossed his path.

Mr. Owens was also a passionate sports fan. His favorite teams were the Buffalo Sabres and the Baltimore Ravens. He also had a great appreciation for music, especially the timeless songs of The Beatles, which brought him much joy throughout his life. Whether cheering for his teams or sharing his love for music, Mr. Owens brought joy to those around him.

Mr. Owens was predeceased by several loved ones, including his wife Clara, son Jamar, grandson Derrick, and several siblings. He is survived by his children John (Voncille), Clarice, Michael (Marie), Terrance, Desiree, Rodney (Nan), and Anthony Owens; his sister Eunice (Lester) Hubbard; 18 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren, and 5 great-great-grandchildren, along with a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

Mr. John Bernard Owens lived a life of devotion to his family, his community, and his faith. His unwavering commitment to those he loved and his generosity towards others made a profound impact on all who knew him. Mr. Owens was a man who believed in the importance of family above all else and worked tirelessly to provide for and support those around him. His kindness, loyalty, and the warmth of his heart will forever be remembered, and his legacy will continue to inspire all those whose lives he touched.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE AND
LEGACY OF SEPI SAIDI

HON. DEBORAH K. ROSS

OF NORTH CAROLINA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, April 3, 2025

Ms. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of my dear friend, Sepi Saidi, who passed away on March 24, 2025. Sepi was a trailblazer and beloved member of the Wake County community who nurtured her company from the ground-up in a male-dominated field. Her contributions to our community will live on for years to come in her children, friends, and the many members of our community she touched throughout her life.

Born on October 10, 1962, Sepi spent the first 15 years of her life in Tehran, Iran, where she was raised in a household with both a college-educated mother and grandmother. She moved to Raleigh as a high school transfer student in 1978 as the Iranian Revolution was unfolding in her home country, graduating from North Carolina State University with degrees in Civil & Agricultural Engineering. Sepi embraced opportunity, leaving a position at the North Carolina Department of Transportation in 2001 to found SEPI Engineering and Construction with a home equity loan, three employees, and two contracts. Within two decades, she grew SEPI Engineering and Construction to employ 300 workers and \$40 million in revenue, becoming one of the top 500 private engineering firms in the country.

Sepi was well-known as an energetic, innovative leader in the Triangle. Beyond the success of SEPI Engineering and Construction, she held leadership positions at several important nonprofits and government organizations. Her wisdom and insights were valued at the Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority and the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce, earning her recognition as a Top Entrepreneur, Career Woman of the Year, and Top CEO. She was inducted into the North Carolina Business Hall of Fame in 2016 and the North Carolina Women Business Owners Hall of Fame in 2022.

However, more than any of these prestigious accolades, Sepi will be remembered for living life with intention and compassion. She always took the time to learn everything she could about her employees and was a conscientious friend and mentor to many who aspired to follow in her footsteps. She was also a fierce advocate for women's equality in the workplace and in society. She credited her mother and grandmother for encouraging her and her sister to pursue an education and pursue careers they could be passionate about.

I have known Sepi for more than 20 years, both personally and professionally. We collaborated on transportation, immigration, and women's issues. Together, we tried our best to make North Carolina a more prosperous and welcoming place. I will miss her as a dear friend and as an inspiring leader. Her son, Bardia, has been a valuable and trusted member of my team since I first ran for Congress. Every day, I see that he embodies her spirit, determination, and grace.

Sepi was an extraordinary woman who lived a remarkable life, and I will always be grateful that I had the immense privilege of knowing her. She was a devoted mother, compassionate friend, visionary thinker, and dear friend. She will be forever missed by her children Nakisa Asefnia and Bardia Asefnia, her siblings Sofey Saidi and Taher Saidi, and her many friends and colleagues. She left an immeasurable mark on our community, and her legacy will live on for generations to come.

CELEBRATING GURUDEV SRI SRI
RAVI SHANKAR

HON. TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY

OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, April 3, 2025

Mr. KENNEDY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a globally revered spiritual and humanitarian leader who has spearheaded an unprecedented worldwide movement for a stress-free, violence-free society. Through his organizations, including the Art of Living and

the International Association for Human Values, Gurudev Shankar has impacted an estimated 800 million people across 180 countries. His programs have empowered individuals to tackle challenges at the global, national, community, and individual levels.

Gurudev Shankar was born in 1956 in Southern India, where he demonstrated his spiritual and intellectual gifts at an early age. By the age of four, Gurudev Shankar was reciting the Bhagavad Gita and meditating. In 1982, during a ten-day period of silence, Gurudev Shankar developed Sudarshan Kriya, a powerful breathing technique that became central to the Art of Living courses, offering stress relief and well-being to millions.

Gurudev Shankar founded The Art of Living as an international non-profit organization dedicated to fostering peace and human values. He also established the International Association for Human Values to support sustainable development and conflict resolution worldwide. His programs have made significant impacts in conflict zones such as Kashmir, Colombia, and Iraq, and have provided trauma relief for war veterans and communities affected by violence.

In addition to his global peace efforts, Gurudev Shankar is committed to education and environmental conservation. His initiatives have led to the creation of over 1,300 schools providing free education to underserved children in India, and his organization has planted over 100 million trees across the globe. Furthermore, The Art of Living's prison program has reached over 800,000 prisoners, helping to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar as he visits Western New York to lead "The Journey Within," an evening of meditation and wisdom offering a unique opportunity for attendees to experience his transformative teachings firsthand. His lifelong commitment to peace, education, and humanitarian work continues to inspire millions worldwide, and we are all the better for it.