

The church's commitment to service has also been exemplified by initiatives like the establishment of St. Veronica's Mission in the Lake Como area, which served the community for over 25 years.

Today, as it continues to be a cornerstone of our district, Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church remains dedicated to faith, unity, and outreach. Its ongoing legacy enriches the lives of all who are fortunate to be part of this vibrant community.

On behalf of the 33rd Congressional District of Texas, I extend my warmest congratulations to the parishioners, clergy, and leaders of Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church as they celebrate this incredible milestone. Their unwavering dedication to faith and service is an inspiration to us all. Let this recognition stand as a tribute to the church's ongoing legacy and its continued positive impact on Fort Worth and beyond.

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HONORING LARRY CONDON

**HON. RITCHIE TORRES**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 14, 2025*

Mr. TORRES of New York. Mr. Speaker, I want to honor the life and memory of Larry Condon. A New York Advocate and well-respected man who dedicated much of his time providing transformative philanthropic funding to a host of initiatives. At the time of his passing, Larry was still working tirelessly for others. He was serving as Chairman Emeritus of the Mertz Gilmore Foundation, a Life Trustee at the New York Botanical Garden, and an honorary advisor to the Public Theater.

Larry became one of the six original trustees of the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, which during its 30-year life distributed 450 million dollars to the Public Theater, The New York Botanical Garden, the Joyce Theater, WNET, and many other cultural, environmental and civil rights organizations. This was coupled with his leadership of the Mertz Gilmore foundation which focused on climate change, civil rights, LGBTQ rights, community engagement, and the performing arts in New York City.

His work with the New York Botanical Garden was immense. Larry underwrote multiple initiatives including exhibitions, visitor programs, scientific works, and important capital projects including the Haupt Conservatory. Larry also worked diligently to protect and endow the LeEsther T. Mertz Library, the world's leading botanical library.

Larry Condon lived his life in pursuit of improving the world around him for generations to come. From his first job as a high school teacher to his philanthropic work, Larry provided growth and love to those around him. He will be sorely missed.

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HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN HERO DR. RICHARD BENSON

**HON. BETH VAN DUYNÉ**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 14, 2025*

Ms. VAN DUYNÉ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Dr.

Richard Benson, president of The University of Texas at Dallas. In 1980, Dr. Benson began his career in higher education as an assistant professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Rochester. He quickly progressed, serving as the dean for graduate studies in the College of Engineering and Applied Science and the chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering. After, he spent 10 years heading the Departments of Mechanical Engineering and Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering at Penn State, as well as 11 years as dean of Virginia Tech's College of Engineering. In 2016, Dr. Benson became the fifth president of The University of Texas at Dallas and has spent the past eight years overseeing monumental campus and academic growth.

His tenure at UT Dallas has seen the construction of two million square feet of new buildings, including the Callier Center for Communication Disorders, Engineering and Computer Science West, Davidson-Gundy Alumni Center, Brain Performance Institute, and two new student housing complexes. Additionally, Dr. Benson has elevated the university's innovative research by expanding its partnership with UT Southwestern Medical Center and opening a 150,000 square foot Texas Instruments Biomedical Engineering and Sciences Building. Under his leadership, UT Dallas has experienced record enrollments, expanded its sports program, and has been recognized as a top value college by The Princeton Review, U.S. News & World Report, and Forbes, enhancing the university's reputation as an educational powerhouse in North Texas.

I thank Dr. Benson for consistently leading with integrity and passion during his more than four decades of guiding and inspiring young minds.

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HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF ANTHONY AQUARO

**HON. NICOLE MALLIOTAKIS**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 14, 2025*

Ms. MALLIOTAKIS. Mr. Speaker, Anthony Aquaro was born in Brooklyn on February 27, 1921, and served our Nation in the United States Navy during World War II from 1942 to 1945 as a first-class boatswain's mate on the USS *Impulse* and the USS *Kingsmill*.

In 1944, while on leave, Aquaro married his high school sweetheart, Gloria. The couple, believed to be Staten Island's longest-married, were together for nearly 80 years.

Aquaro joined the FDNY as a firefighter when he was 31 and served for 26 years with Engine 269 on Union Street in Brooklyn highlighting his commitment to his community. Aquaro later settled in New Dorp in 1965 and had two children. He later became the grandfather of four and the great-grandfather of eight.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Anthony Aquaro for his dedicated service to our community, city, and Nation. His unwavering commitment and bravery have left an indelible mark on all who knew him. We mourn his loss alongside his family and friends, and his legacy will be forever remembered.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. ANN WAGNER**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 14, 2025*

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I regret that I was not present for roll call votes on January 13, 2025. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 8 and YEA on Roll Call No. 9.

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HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN HERO BILL ROBERTSON

**HON. BETH VAN DUYNÉ**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 14, 2025*

Ms. VAN DUYNÉ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor our Texas-24 Hometown Hero and Bedford resident, Bill Robertson. Now 100 years old, he has spent decades serving our community and country.

After a year at Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth, Bill enlisted in the Army Air Force and flew P-51 fighters during World War II. He returned to North Texas after the war, working for Southwestern Engraving Company before teaming up with his father to found Process Engraving Company in Fort Worth. After a successful career, Bill retired in 1996 and handed the reins of his family-run business to his son. Named "Optimist of the Year" in 1988 by the Breakfast Optimist Club of East Fort Worth, Bill has helped feed, educate, and serve Tarrant County residents for 26 years. A man of deep faith, he is also a member of Woodland Heights Baptist Church.

I thank Mr. Robertson for his heart of service and positive vision, as I join the many North Texans wishing him a happy 100th birthday.

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REMEMBERING KELLY BLANTON

**HON. VINCE FONG**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 14, 2025*

Mr. FONG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and enduring legacy of Dr. Kelly Blanton, an educational visionary who dedicated his career to improving the education of his students and peers.

Born on January 12, 1937, near Savoy, Texas, Dr. Blanton moved west during the dust bowl and was raised in Kern County. Through the Great Depression and World War II, Dr. Blanton lived alongside his six siblings and parents at farm labor camps. While residing at Wasco Labor Camp, they supported the family by picking cotton. Discovering his early passion for education, Dr. Blanton would successfully pursue degrees from Bakersfield College, San Francisco State University, California State University, Fresno, and ultimately a Doctorate from the University of Southern California.

With humble beginnings, Dr. Blanton would commit to ensuring that education remained a transformative force in the lives of young people. Dr. Blanton's career in education began in

1959 as a teacher at Palm Avenue School in Wasco, California. He would achieve his first leadership role as Maple Elementary School District's Superintendent and later join the Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office in 1971. As the 18th Superintendent of Schools for Kern County from 1986 to 1999, Dr. Blanton's leadership made our community's schools stronger, safer, and more modern.

During his life, Dr. Blanton introduced educational policies and programs that continue to benefit children and families in Kern County and across California. He was instrumental in creating alternative education programs which have achieved reduced dropout rates and continue to provide countless students with a second chance to succeed. Dr. Blanton also championed new programs to accommodate physically disabled students and provide internet connectivity to the many rural districts in Kern County. A leader who believed in giving his students and teachers every resource they would need to succeed, it is nearly impossible to find a school in Kern County that does not owe Dr. Blanton a great debt of gratitude. One of his most enduring contributions was the development of the Self-Insured Schools of California, which provides comprehensive insurance policies to schools across California and now the largest public school health pool in the United States. His foresight in establishing this initiative continues to provide affordable and comprehensive healthcare for thousands of educators and their families. He also helped revitalize the heart of the Kern community by both relocating the Kern County Superintendent of Schools office to downtown Bakersfield and also establishing Downtown Elementary School to serve the children of Bakersfield's downtown workers.

Dr. Blanton is preceded in death by his wife Yvonne, whom he was married to for sixty-four years and is survived by his daughter Shelley, son Timothy, and six grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me as I express our gratitude to Dr. Kelly Blanton for his lasting contributions to our community and state. His legacy will be upheld through the lives of the children he inspired, the educators he empowered, and the communities he enriched.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. JIMMY GOMEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 14, 2025*

Mr. GOMEZ. Mr. Speaker, on January 13, 2025, I was not recorded on Roll Call Votes No. 8 and No. 9. Had I been present, I would have voted "YEA" on Roll Call Votes No. 8 and No. 9.

#### HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN HERO TINA WASHINGTON

### HON. BETH VAN DUYNÉ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 14, 2025*

Ms. VAN DUYNÉ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Tina

Washington. As director of the Fort Worth non-profit Above the Clouds-Texas, Tina is making a remarkable impact by providing free arts education to North Texas children aged 5-17. Her organization is dedicated to supporting financially insecure families through classes like classical ballet, hip-hop and drama, along with the requisite equipment, like ballet shoes and tutus.

Tina and her team at Above the Clouds-Texas, are helping to instill self-discipline, self-control, and higher self-esteem in our youth. The mentorship and growth opportunities help steer young North Texans away from negative influences, empowering them to dream big and work hard to achieve goals.

I commend Tina's steadfast dedication to uplifting families by enriching the lives of North Texas children through the creative arts.

#### TRIBUTE TO KENTUCKY STATE SENATOR DENISE HARPER ANGEL

### HON. MORGAN MCGARVEY

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 14, 2025*

Mr. MCGARVEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Kentucky State Senator Denise Harper Angel in recognition of her remarkable 49 years of public service, including 36 years as an elected official.

As a trailblazer and devoted public servant, Senator Harper Angel has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to the well-being of Kentucky's most vulnerable populations. From her historic election as the first woman to serve as Jefferson County Property Valuation Administrator to her distinguished tenure in the Kentucky State Senate, her career has been defined by advocacy, leadership, and meaningful action.

Senator Harper Angel has been instrumental in advancing critical legislation to protect children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities, including the creation of the Kentucky Golden Alert Program, the passage of the SAFE Act, and initiatives addressing youth suicide and sexual violence. Her dedication to justice, accountability, and victim support has left a lasting impact on the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Through her tireless service on numerous legislative committees, her efforts have strengthened Kentucky's communities, supported victims of crime, and enhanced public safety. Senator Harper Angel's steadfast leadership, from improving forensic processes to increasing compensation for victims, has set a standard of excellence and compassion for public service.

Mr. Speaker, Senator Denise Harper Angel's legacy is a testament to the power of servant leadership, and her work will inspire future generations. I ask that the House of Representatives join me in recognizing her unwavering dedication and relentless commitment to protecting and supporting our Commonwealth's most vulnerable populations and congratulating her on her retirement.

#### RECOGNIZING BRUCE MCPHERSON FOR HIS DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT TO THE PEOPLE AND STATE OF CALIFORNIA

### HON. JIMMY PANETTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 14, 2025*

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Bruce McPherson for his tireless dedication to not only public service but to the people of California. Mr. McPherson was nominated to be the 30th Secretary of State for California and was previously an Assemblyman and a State Senator. However, his career did not begin with politics.

Mr. McPherson was born and raised in Santa Cruz, California. He attended Santa Cruz High and then went on to study at California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo. After graduation he worked for the Santa Cruz Sentinel starting as a reporter and eventually rising to the position of editor, after being inspired by his father, Mr. McPherson began his career in public service.

Mr. McPherson was first elected to the California State Assembly in 1993, representing the Monterey Bay region, and later serving two terms in the California State Senate. In both the Assembly and the Senate Mr. McPherson was committed to bipartisanship, often working across the aisle with elected Democrats. In 2005 Mr. McPherson was nominated to replace the former Secretary of State. He was confirmed unanimously by both Democratic-controlled houses of the California State Legislature. As Secretary of State Mr. McPherson oversaw a 500-person department with five offices across the state which managed the state's election system.

Following his time as Secretary of State, Mr. McPherson returned home with the aim of replacing the Fifth Districts' County supervisor. In 2013 he began his 12-year stint as county supervisor. During this time California underwent the COVID-19 pandemic, the CZU fires, and atmospheric river disasters. His biggest achievement, in his opinion, was the establishment of Central Coast Community Energy, a clean-energy provider that now covers the five counties of the central coast of California.

His time as a public servant has been the highlight of his career. After stepping down from the dais for the final time Mr. McPherson plans to spend more time with his wife of 55 years, Mary, as well as his daughter, son-in-law, and two grandchildren.

#### HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN HEROES BRETT ROBERSON AND COREY RATTAN

### HON. BETH VAN DUYNÉ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 14, 2025*

Ms. VAN DUYNÉ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor our Texas-24 Hometown Heroes, Southlake Officers Brett Roberson and Corey Rattan who have gone above and beyond to serve North Texas students. As first responders, the selfless duo from Carroll ISD have embodied the spirit of North Texas' School Resource Officer (SRO) community through