

Reagan Graham. Reagan is a member of Girl Scouts of Gulf Coast Florida, Troop 441 and has exemplified extraordinary leadership, innovative problem-solving, and a demonstrated commitment to making a lasting, positive impact, by earning the most prestigious award in Girl Scouting, the Gold Award.

Gold Award Girl Scouts are recognized as trailblazers who are willing to tackle the most pressing challenges facing their communities and the world with measurable, sustainable, and far-reaching results. To earn the Girl Scout Gold Award, high school-age Girl Scouts must identify and investigate an issue they care about, devise a plan, and then lead a team of experts and community members to implement a project that produces lasting change. Over the course of 1–2 years, Gold Award Girl Scouts demonstrate significant initiative, commitment, and leadership, distinguishing them from their peers. Through their resourcefulness and perseverance, they embody the Girl Scout Law to truly make the world a better place.

Reagan's project, "Heart & Sole," in partnership with Angel's Attic, The Out-of-Door Academy, and Woodland Community Church, was an excellent endeavor to address clothing access for homeless individuals in our community. Reagan took action by educating and training over a dozen volunteers on clothing insecurity among homeless individuals. She guided them in organizing a clothing drive, collecting over 2,000 pairs of socks, and establishing a permanent sock closet. Her efforts will have a lasting positive impact on the community.

On behalf of the 17th Congressional District of Florida, congratulations to Reagan Graham for achieving the highest distinction in Girl Scouts, the Gold Award. We thank Reagan for her leadership and making such a positive, lasting change in our community.

CONGRATULATING MARY ANN
FLYNN ON HER RETIREMENT

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate a dedicated professional with the Department of Veterans Affairs on the occasion of her retirement. Ms. Mary Ann Flynn is an exemplary public servant who has demonstrated the highest standards of professionalism serving our Nation's veterans.

Ms. Flynn began her distinguished legal career in the United States Navy, where she served on both active duty and in the Navy reserves as an attorney. As a Captain, she served as a military judge on the United States Navy-Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals. Following her time on active duty, Ms. Flynn joined the Department of Veterans Affairs in its Office of General Counsel (OGC), where, with the exception of a short period when she served as the Deputy Director for Policy and Procedures for the Veteran's Benefits Administration's Compensation Service, she spent the bulk of her more than 32 years of service.

In OGC, Ms. Flynn progressed from a staff attorney to Deputy Assistant General Counsel,

then Principal Deputy Assistant General Counsel, and finally Chief Counsel of OGC's Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Litigation Group, an appellate litigation office of over 125 attorneys representing the Secretary of Veterans Affairs before the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. Her career in public service is a testament to the importance of selfless service to others.

For the vast majority of her legal career, Ms. Flynn provided guidance and legal counsel to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in cases before the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. She has been involved in a remarkable breadth of important legal matters related to veterans' benefits, striving to ensure that veterans, their families, and caregivers get the benefits to which they are entitled. Her contributions to developing and evolving the practice of veterans' law will have a lasting legacy and merit special recognition.

As Ms. Flynn embarks on a new chapter in life, it is my hope that she will recall, with a deep sense of pride and accomplishment, the outstanding contributions she has made to the United States Navy, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and veterans of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Ms. Mary Ann Flynn for her years of service to our armed forces and our Nation. I congratulate Ms. Flynn on her retirement. May her life be filled with health and happiness.

RECOGNIZING THE STICKNEY POLICE ASSOCIATION 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JESÚS G. "CHUY" GARCÍA

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Stickney Police Association, the oldest organization in the Village of Stickney, located in Illinois' 4th Congressional District. For a century, the members of this association have been a positive presence in the community. They have raised funds to support youth athletics, clubs, churches, schools, and both the Fire and Police departments.

Beyond their philanthropic work, the Stickney Police Association has played a vital role in building and maintaining trust within our community. They understand the importance of supporting one another and serving all members of the community with respect and care.

Our community appreciates their ongoing efforts to keep us safe and supported.

I thank the Stickney Police Association for their unwavering commitment to service and their dedication to our community and each other. Congratulations on their centennial celebration.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE
OF JAY BYERS

HON. ZACHARY NUNN

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Mr. NUNN of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of President Jay Byers, a true servant leader, devoted father and husband, and proud Iowan whose lifelong commitment to our state inspired all who had the privilege of working with him.

President Byers was a graduate of Manson High School and a proud member of the Simpson College Class of 1993. He earned his law degree from the University of Iowa College of Law before beginning his career serving the people of Iowa's 3rd district as a staff member for former Congressman Leonard Boswell.

I came to know Jay during his time at the helm of the Greater Des Moines Partnership, where he spent more than a decade building one of the most respected economic development organizations in the country. Under his leadership, the Partnership gained national recognition, growing to include 24 affiliate chambers, more than 6,500 members, and thousands of businesses across central Iowa.

I saw President Byers' leadership and commitment firsthand while I served in the Iowa Statehouse. He understood intuitively how to unite business leaders, educators, and policymakers around a common vision, always driven by our shared goal to make Iowa a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

Although Jay spent much of his professional life expanding opportunities for Iowa businesses, he never left the Simpson College community. He served on the Board of Trustees for 11 years before returning to education full-time in 2023 as the 25th president of Simpson College, where he kindled a sense of pride and community that led the college to its largest freshman class in more than a decade.

Mr. Speaker, President Byers' passion was building a stronger, more connected, and brighter Iowa and that legacy will endure far beyond his years of committed service. He is survived by his wife Katie, and their daughters, Sophie and Charlotte, who remain in our thoughts and our prayers.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring President Jay Byers.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF
FRANCINE KERNER, CHIEF COUNSEL,
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY
ADMINISTRATION

HON. JAMIE RASKIN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Francine Kerner, who retired on February 28, as Chief Counsel of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) after dedicating over 50 years of her career to public service.

On September 11, 2001, Ms. Kerner woke up and went to work, just like any other day. For her, that was as Deputy Assistant General

Counsel at the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Enforcement Division. She was in her office at Main Treasury when the terrorist attacks began. That fateful day changed the world and changed Ms. Kerner's life.

A few weeks later, Congress enacted the Aviation and Transportation Security Act and established TSA. Ms. Kerner was one of a small group of federal workers chosen to stand up the fledgling agency with a monumental task ahead of them.

To secure U.S. passengers and the American people from the grave threat posed by airline hijackers, Congress mandated that TSA begin screening passengers and checked baggage at 450 commercial airports within just a few months. Meeting these deadlines at the time required the largest mobilization of the federal government since WWII and the largest civilian undertaking in the history of the U.S. government.

As TSA Chief Counsel, Ms. Kerner was responsible for providing the legal and policy advice for this record level of mobilization. For the next 23 years, she served as a principal architect of TSA's mission-critical programs and operations, supported by the outstanding team of attorneys she recruited, guided, and whose careers in Federal Service she unstintingly advanced.

Prior to being named TSA's Chief Counsel, Ms. Kerner's Federal career spanned two decades, beginning as Counsel to the Inspector General (IG) at the Commerce Department in 1979 before serving in several managerial positions at the Treasury. She later helped the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms overhaul its fair hiring, promotion and professional development programs.

Ms. Kerner found her way into public service after earning her law degree at the New York University School of Law in 1974. While at NYU Law, she interned for the New York City Law Department and served with such distinction that her supervisor, Mary P. Bass, later asked her to work in the Carter Administration where Ms. Bass was serving as the first IG at the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Ms. Kerner is the recipient of numerous awards earned throughout her career of service, including the Presidential Meritorious Rank Awards in 2001 and 2022; the American University Roger W. Jones Award in 2023; the D.C. Bar Association's Beatrice Rosenberg Award for Excellence in Government Service; the Burton Award for Public Service in the Government; and the TSA Federal Woman's Program Trailblazer Award in 2011, in recognition of her efforts to advance the career of women at TSA.

Throughout her career, Ms. Kerner never lost sight of the importance of family. She was careful to foster a family-friendly environment in each office she led. Her devotion to her own family set a powerful example for the many employees that she supervised and mentored across her decades in federal service. I want to conclude by recognizing her husband Michael Klein, her children Elizabeth and Adam, her daughter-in-law Robin, and her grandchildren, Maxine, Louis and Sidney. On behalf of a grateful Nation and the residents of Maryland's beautiful Eighth District, I wish Francine Kerner and her family nothing but the best as they begin this new chapter in their lives.

HONORING JIM HANDLEY FOR HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO FLORIDA AGRICULTURE

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, Jim Handley retired from his roles at the Florida Cattlemen's Association after 27 years of service on April 15, 2025. Executive vice president of the Florida Cattlemen's Association and chief executive officer of the Florida Beef Council since 1998, Jim has also served as executive director of the Florida Cattlemen's Foundation, executive director of the Florida COW PAC, chief operating officer of the Florida Cattle Enhancement Board, and managing editor of The Florida Cattleman and Livestock Journal.

Though Jim isn't one for fanfare, his contributions speak volumes. He has always led with heart—building genuine relationships and championing education, youth involvement, and public outreach. His guidance helped expand fundraising efforts, modernize facilities, and elevate Florida's cattle industry on multiple fronts. Jim's leadership has forged Florida into one of the strongest and most respected state associations in the country.

Throughout his career, Jim has also served on numerous volunteer boards, including the Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET), the Florida 4-H Foundation, the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame, and the Florida Agriculture Council, among others. While he has received more awards than he would ever mention himself, one recent honor stands out. In 2024, he was both surprised and humbled by the establishment of the Jim Handley Endowed Professorship of Beef Sciences at the University of Florida. The endowment was created by the Florida Cattlemen's Foundation in recognition of Jim's unwavering commitment to the future of Florida's cattle industry, its people, and the quality of education coming from the state's flagship land-grant university.

Jim Handley retires, leaving a legacy of integrity, leadership, and loyal service to Florida agriculture.

RECOGNIZING THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF HOMESTRETCH

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the 35th Anniversary of Homestretch, an extraordinary organization based in Northern Virginia that has transformed the lives of thousands of families facing homelessness and poverty.

Founded in 1990, Homestretch has served more than 2,500 families, providing not just shelter, but the comprehensive tools and support needed to achieve long-term stability and self-sufficiency. Their mission is deeply rooted in the belief that with the right resources, even the most vulnerable families can overcome the devastating cycles of homelessness and poverty.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented affordable housing crisis, both nationally and in

the Commonwealth of Virginia. Since 2020, homelessness in Virginia has increased by 10 percent, with family homelessness alone rising a staggering 17 percent between 2021 and 2022. The work of organizations like Homestretch has never been more vital.

Homestretch serves families in the most challenging of circumstances. 90 percent of the adults in their program are single mothers. A majority are survivors of domestic violence, individuals with disabilities or no work history, and many face high debt, damaged credit, and language barriers. Roughly 60 percent of those served are people of color, and one-third are refugees or seeking asylum.

Despite these challenges, Homestretch helps families not only secure housing, but also access education, develop a career path, find childcare, secure reliable transportation, and improve their physical and financial health.

Their model is comprehensive and long-term. Participants work toward degrees and certifications, learn financial literacy, improve their credit, save for the future, and gain the tools to provide for themselves and their children. Homestretch measures success not simply by whether a family finds shelter, but by whether they emerge with the ability to maintain stable housing, meet their basic needs, and chart a course toward economic mobility.

For someone experiencing homelessness, knowing you are part of a community that cares and will give you the assistance necessary to get back on your feet can help ease the burden of your plight. In a county as economically prosperous as Fairfax County, it can be easy to forget there are still citizens who go without the most basic necessities. Organizations like Homestretch are helping to make sure that we bring everyone to the table and providing all with a path towards economic success and independence.

This incredible work is made possible by the dedicated staff, volunteers, donors, and community partners who have supported Homestretch for 35 years. It is a shining example of what can be achieved when we invest in people, meet them where they are, and give them the tools they need to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Homestretch on its 35th Anniversary. Northern Virginia is stronger, healthier, and more compassionate because of the work of Homestretch.

POEM TO HONOR DARIN COWARD

HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in memory of Darin Coward who worked for 23 years at Colonial Williamsburg. He was beloved by all his co-workers and many guests over the years due to his hospitality and welcoming nature. My thoughts and prayers go out to his loved ones. I include in the RECORD the following poem:

A SPIRIT OF 76

In these the days of our lives, there are those
who to us such warmth provide.
All in their thoughts and deeds realized.
Filling our hearts up so deep inside.
Darin was such a man of warmth and caring.