

Western New York and the Southern Tier are home to many proud service members and veterans, and our community has a long and proud tradition of military service. It is my honor to recognize their bravery. On behalf of the United States Congress and the constituents of New York's 23rd Congressional District, I thank these men and women for their service and all those who continue to serve with them.

RECOGNIZING THE CRYSTAL LAKE STRIKERS FOR RECEIVING THE CARL E. WEHDE AWARD

HON. BILL FOSTER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Crystal Lake Strikers for receiving the Carl E. Wehde Award. This award honors the late Carl E. Wehde and celebrates outstanding contributions that enhance the quality of life for the people of Crystal Lake.

The Crystal Lake Strikers are a drumline that seamlessly integrates the arts and education. They perform year-round and offer a wide range of programs in percussion, color guard, and other performing arts disciplines. Their mission is twofold: to provide high-quality entertainment to the community and to build confidence in students. By expanding upon lessons taught in local schools, the Strikers meet the educational needs of Crystal Lake, offering percussion experiences for children at all grade levels through six distinct groups.

In recognition of their impact, the Strikers were previously honored with the Illinois Park and Recreation Association's Outstanding Program and Special Event Award for the creation of the Kingpins drumline, an educational program designed specifically for children with special needs.

The Strikers' commitment to serving the Crystal Lake community extends beyond the classroom. They actively support aspiring performers through college scholarships, fundraisers, and by providing a platform for young talent in the performing arts.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent the Crystal Lake Strikers, whose contributions to the arts and education have had a profound and lasting impact on the city. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Strikers on receiving this well-deserved award and for continuing to inspire the next generation of performers.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF MR. PAUL ROGER DIONNE

HON. JARED F. GOLDEN

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Mr. GOLDEN of Maine. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the life of Paul Roger Dionne, who passed away on April 17, 2025. A pillar of the Lewiston community, Paul spent his life in service to others.

As a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War, Paul earned two Bronze

Stars and two Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry. After returning home, Paul met his best friend and soulmate, Diane (LeBlanc), and they married in 1970. Together, they built a home and raised two daughters, Melodie and Michelle, and later welcomed five grandchildren.

In addition to Paul's service to his country, he also served the people of Maine. Leading his community as Assistant District Attorney and as Mayor of Lewiston, Paul was instrumental in bringing the University of Maine system to Lewiston (UMLA). Later in his career, Paul was appointed Maine's first Executive Director of the Workers' Compensation Board, serving under Governors King and Baldacci. In this role Paul fought for workers' rights and is remembered for his compassion and tact.

However, Paul's greatest impact was on his beloved community of Lewiston. A staple at every community event, Paul was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, led the Central Maine Medical Center Board of Trustees, and earned recognition as one of Lewiston's Citizens of the Year. Additionally, Paul coached hundreds of students on the Lewiston High School Mock Trial Team, which he did proudly alongside his daughter.

Remembered by many for his big smile, and his love for one another, he lifted up his community. Mr. Speaker, for these reasons, I am honored to pay tribute to Paul Dionne.

RECOGNIZING HANNAH DICKINSON, GOLD AWARD

HON. W. GREGORY STEUBE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Mr. STEUBE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Hannah Dickinson. Hannah is a member of Sandy Beaches Service Unit within Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida, 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.

Hannah's project, Kindness Counts, in partnership with Port Charlotte High School and the National Honor Society and Key Club, was an excellent endeavor to address mental health and bullying in our community. Hannah took action by coordinating with school administrators, educating community members about the harmful effects of bullying, and creating a motivational mural to be displayed at her

school, which will have a positive impact on our community for years to come.

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

HONORING THE RETIREMENT AND SERVICE OF GARY JOHNSON

HON. JOHN GARAMENDI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate Gary Johnson on his retirement following a distinguished career spanning more than four decades in engineering, construction, and public service. His legacy of leadership and service will continue to inspire us for years to come.

As Vice President of Government Affairs and Industry Relations for Granite Construction Company, Mr. Johnson has been a tireless advocate for infrastructure investment, sound regulatory policy, and industry collaboration. His leadership has helped shape national conversations around transportation, construction materials, and sustainable development. Before assuming this role, Mr. Johnson led strategic planning and aggregate resource development at Granite, applying his deep technical expertise to ensure responsible resource management.

Prior to joining Granite in 2002, Mr. Johnson held senior leadership roles with a nationwide engineering consulting firm, Mine Reclamation LLC, and the Santa Rosa Group Corporation. His diverse experience across public and private sectors underscores his commitment to advancing engineering innovation and environmental stewardship.

Mr. Johnson earned both his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Texas at Austin and is a Registered Professional Engineer in the state of Texas. Beyond his professional accomplishments, Gary holds an impressive record of public service, including his tenure as Chair of the Colorado River Region of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board from 2000 to 2006.

Throughout his career, Mr. Johnson has been known not only for his technical acumen and policy insight, but for his integrity, collaborative spirit, and unwavering dedication to building a better, more connected America.

On behalf of California's 8th Congressional District, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Gary Johnson on his well-deserved retirement. We wish him the very best in the years ahead.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 119; and YEA on Roll Call No. 120.

CELEBRATING OUR 2025 SPRING INTERN CLASS FOR THEIR SERVICE TO CALIFORNIA'S 20TH DISTRICT

HON. VINCE FONG

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Mr. FONG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding group of interns who have supported the work of the 20th District of California this spring. These bright and driven young people—serving in my Washington, D.C. office and my Bakersfield, California office—have brought a spirit of dedication and enthusiasm that enriched our team. At a time when many young Americans are questioning the role of public service, their eagerness to engage with the federal government on behalf of their communities offers real encouragement for the future of our Nation.

With their time in Congress reaching its close, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Jonathan Clark, Justin Gibbins, and Jack Putrino for their work in my Washington, D.C. office, and Ava Dykes for her service in my Bakersfield, California office. Their hard work and dedication have been invaluable, and I hope that the experiences gained here will serve them well in their future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING NANCY MERKLING FOR RECEIVING THE ROBERT O. COVEY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARD

HON. BILL FOSTER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Nancy Merklng for receiving the Robert O. Covey Business of the Year Award. This award pays tribute to the late Robert O. Covey and celebrates businesses in the Crystal Lake area that have demonstrated outstanding success and community involvement.

As the owner and producer of Nancy Merklng Productions, Ms. Merklng offers professional photography and mentorship services, inspiring and guiding others who are pursuing careers in the field. Her vision and artistry distinguish her work in family portraits, headshots, and commercial photography.

Ms. Merklng has long demonstrated a deep commitment to the arts. She previously served as the Co-Executive Director of the Lakeside Legacy Foundation, an organization dedicated to preserving The Dole, a historic mansion in Crystal Lake, for the community to enjoy.

Since 2011, Ms. Merklng has been the driving force behind the 4th Fridays Art Event at The Dole, which brings together photography, art, and music to enrich the local cultural landscape. Held ten times a year, this program fosters collaboration among a diverse range of artists and provides a vibrant social space that celebrates creative expression. Through her vision, Ms. Merklng has significantly contributed to the cultural vitality of Crystal Lake, creating valuable opportunities for artists to share their work with the community.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent Nancy Merklng, whose dedication as both an artist

and a mentor has made a lasting impact on our community. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Ms. Merklng on receiving this well-deserved recognition.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JASON CROW

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Mr. CROW. Mr. Speaker, on May 5, 2025, I was unable to be present to cast my vote on the MEGOBARI Act (H.R. 36) and the ACES Act (H.R. 530). Had I been present for Roll Call No. 115 and Roll Call No. 116, I would have voted "AYE" for both measures.

CELEBRATING 2025 BLACK HISTORY MONTH LUMINARIES

HON. MAXWELL FROST

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, Black History is American History.

The annual observance of Black History Month is more than a chronological account of our past, it is that of our present and our future.

It's about the joy, the culture, the resistance, the fight, and how far Black Americans have come in this country.

Celebrating our Black communities and Black history is so important, especially now, in times like this where values of diversity, equity and inclusion are under attack.

But despite that we move forward in the steps of our ancestors and in the steps of joy and resistance. That is why it is my honor to recognize the 2025 Black Luminaries of Florida's 10th Congressional District who have transformed lives and inspired generations, these luminaries are:

Dr. Laine Powell—Founder and Executive Director of Tech Sassy Girlz.

Ms. Eloise Abraham—Executive Director of Guardian Care Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

Lashea C. Reaves—Executive Director of 8 cent in a Jar.

Inez Long (posthumously)—Long-time President and CEO of the Black Business Investment Fund (BBIF) Florida, and co-founder of the African American Alliance of CDFI CEOs.

Dr. Jeffrey Redding—2019 winner of the prestigious Grammy award, The Music Educator Award and a UCF Director of Choral Activities.

Mr. Omari Jones—Boxing Bronze medalist from the 2024 Olympics.

Alvin Cowans—President/CEO at McCoy Federal Credit Union.

Gene Martin—Founder & Executive Director—Route 7.

Retired Elder/Reverend Henry L. Postell, II.—Owner of Postell Mortuary.

RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CITY OF OCOEE

HON. DANIEL WEBSTER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Mr. WEBSTER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to recognize and celebrate the 100 Year Anniversary of the City of Ocoee, Florida. Ocoee officially became a municipality in 1923 and was incorporated as a city in May 1925. The City of Ocoee will host their Centennial Celebration on Friday, May 9, 2025.

Ocoee was first settled in the mid-1800s, near Starke Lake, southeast of Lake Apopka. In 1886, Dr. H.K. Clarke, Charles J. Chunn, and R.B.F. Roper developed the Town of Ocoee subdivision, naming it after the Ocoee River in Tennessee. The name "Ocoee" comes from the Cherokee word for "apricot vine," which is what inspired the city's logo now referred to as the passion flower.

Over the past century, the City of Ocoee has become steeped in rich history made up of significant moments and milestones. Generations have come and gone, each adding their own story to the fabric of Ocoee. Today, with a growing population, over 50,000 people currently call Ocoee home. The City of Ocoee prides itself on the quality of life it provides its citizens. Ocoee's unique location in the heart of Central Florida makes it a wonderful place to live, work and play.

The City of Ocoee will host their Centennial Celebration on Friday, May 9, 2025. I join our community in celebrating this momentous occasion. Happy Centennial, Ocoee.

CELEBRATING THE 74TH BIRTHDAY OF ERIC L. THOMPSON, SR.

HON. JONATHAN L. JACKSON

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 74th birthday of Eric L. Thompson, Sr. Born on April 3, 1951 in Chicago, Illinois. Eric has been a lifelong resident of Chicago and a beloved member of our community.

As a young man, Eric was inspired by the civil rights advocacy of his parents, who frequently worked with my father, Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. to advance civil rights through Operation Rainbow PUSH.

Eric attended Augustana College and later went on to start his own businesses, T&T Food Service, and Eridor Food Service, Inc., named in honor of his sons, Eric and Dorian. Through his hard work and keen business skills, Eric has grown his businesses into the preeminent food service providers in the Chicago area.

In addition to being an accomplished businessman, Eric is also known for his friendly spirit and kindness. To know Eric is to know a friend. As Eric looks back on 74 wonderful years, I hope he is able to rest on his laurels and enjoy celebrating his accomplishments with his family and friends. I wish him many more years of good health.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in celebrating this momentous occasion.