

his life's work. Today, he continues his service through the National Rabbinic Council of ARZA and World Union for Progressive Judaism, guiding the global Reform Jewish movement.

It is with profound respect and admiration that I recognize Rabbi Alan Katz this Jewish American Heritage Month. His legacy of leadership, advocacy, and deep spiritual care continues to bless our community and beyond.

#### RECOGNIZING MIKE LASTRA

#### HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 21, 2025*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding contributions that Mr. Mike Lastra has made to our community in the aftermath of Hurricane Milton. In addition to providing countless hours of direct support to neighbors and flood victims, he helped coordinate the collection and distribution of emergency supplies, meals and donated services to help those who needed help. A truly selfless leader, Mr. Lastra was a strong advocate for bringing in government and non-profit resources to aid in the recovery process.

It is clear Mike Lastra has made a profoundly positive impact on our community, and I am grateful for his service. May we all strive to serve our communities with the same dedication and humility.

#### HONORING TRACEY WILLIAMS-DILLARD

#### HON. ILHAN OMAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 21, 2025*

Ms. OMAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of Tracey Williams-Dillard, CEO and Publisher at the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder—our state's oldest Black-owned newspaper. In 2025, Ms. Williams-Dillard was inducted into the esteemed Half-Century Club by the Minnesota Newspaper Association. This prestigious honor celebrates her 50-plus years of dedication to the newspaper industry, highlighting her unwavering commitment to the legacy of the Spokesman-Recorder and her vital role in amplifying Black voices in media.

Ms. Williams-Dillard's lifelong journey in journalism started at age eight when she began working after school to print addresses at the Spokesman-Recorder, her family's newspaper. It was here that she first learned the importance of hard work, responsibility, and the value of earning a living—lessons that would become the foundation of her career. Over the next decades, Ms. Williams-Dillard performed various roles at the newspaper including as a receptionist, in billing and advertising, and as office manager. Her path to becoming the president and CEO was not straightforward, and her journey reflects her versatility, adaptability, and a deep commitment to both personal and professional growth.

In 2001, she was named President and CEO of the newspaper, and, in 2007, Ms. Wil-

liams-Dillard became its proud owner. Under her leadership, the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder has exemplified excellence, never missing a deadline, a testament to her meticulous attention to detail and steadfast dedication to journalistic integrity.

Ms. Williams-Dillard's leadership is rooted in the strong foundation laid by her predecessors—one built on respect, deep ties to the African American community, and a steadfast commitment to integrity with readers. She has not only maintained these values but has expanded them, ensuring the paper remains a vital and respected voice for historically marginalized communities and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize Ms. Williams-Dillard today for her extraordinary contributions to our community, and for her recent honor from the Minnesota Newspaper Association. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Ms. Williams Dillard—and the whole Spokesman-Recorder team—on this remarkable achievement.

#### CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF POPLAR HILL MANSION

#### HON. ANDY HARRIS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 21, 2025*

Mr. HARRIS of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Poplar Hill Mansion in honor of their upcoming 50th anniversary on August 25, 2025.

The Poplar Hill Mansion is the oldest home in Salisbury, Maryland. As an historic house museum, the Poplar Hill Mansion has served our community through its historic preservation efforts, educational opportunities, and charitable works.

As the representative of Maryland's Eastern Shore, it is my distinct honor to congratulate the Poplar Hill Mansion and wish it the best of luck as it works for another prosperous 50 years.

#### HONORING ROBERT "BOB" BURNEY

#### HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 21, 2025*

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Robert "Bob" M. Burney and his years of service to his community.

Bob was born on December 17, 1965, graduating from New Hartford High School in 1984. Bob attended Mohawk Valley Community College and Utica College, graduating in 1988. After graduation, Bob briefly served as campus security for the State University of New York at Cobleskill before joining the New York State Police in 1989.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Bob was assigned to aid in the search and recovery efforts at Ground Zero in New York City. Unfortunately, it was this assignment that would later cost Bob his life as he was diagnosed with cancer stemming from his assignment there. As a member of Troop D, Bob was also assigned to special assignments including the Hurricane Katrina recov-

ery efforts in New Orleans and Hurricane Sandy clean-up in New York City.

Retiring in 2017, Bob remained active in his community as a member of the Covey-Pashley American Legion Post No. 893 and the Old Forge Council of the Knights of Columbus. Bob's love of golf and hockey was well known, and he actively participated in benefit games in both sports. New York lost one of its best when Bob passed on December 9, 2023.

On behalf of New York's 21st Congressional District, I am proud to recognize the legacy of Trooper Robert "Bob" M. Burney and honor him for his service.

#### RECOGNIZING MERLYN LEWIS

#### HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 21, 2025*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding contributions that Merlyn Lewis has made to our community through her work as an exceptional volunteer for Service Dog Alliance, an all-volunteer non-profit, which promotes and supports the rights and responsibilities of service dog teams, businesses, and the community.

Merlyn Lewis exemplifies servant leadership by empowering volunteers, the community, and individuals with disabilities to ensure safe and unfettered access for service animal handlers. Volunteering more than 10,000 hours, Ms. Lewis has served as President of the Board and Lead Trainer for the organization. She currently serves on the Executive Board as Secretary/Treasurer. Ms. Lewis and her service dog, Sterling, have traveled throughout Florida as role models of what to expect from a well-trained team. She has assisted individuals with disabilities in becoming better handlers and in understanding how to follow state and federal law. Her training for health care professionals, first responders, government staff, and private businesses about the vital work service animals perform has reduced barriers to access in housing, employment, and places of public accommodation and increased community partnerships to combat the misrepresentation of service animals. Service Dog Alliance achieves its mission because Merlyn Lewis is on the front lines and in the trenches, doing whatever is necessary to ensure the organization and those served have all that is needed to be successful.

It is clear that Merlyn Lewis has made a profoundly positive impact on our community, and I am grateful for her service. May we all strive to serve our communities with the same dedication and humility.

#### RECOGNIZING REBEKAH FISCHOFF

#### HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 21, 2025*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, one of my constituents, Ms. Rebekah Fischhoff, graduates today from Rutgers University at Camden.

As a student at Rutgers-Camden and before that at Brookdale Community College in my

district, Ms. Fischhoff has been an outstanding advocate for higher education reforms, particularly with regard to investment in student aid and greater professional development opportunities for students. I first met Ms. Fischhoff when she came to my office to discuss legislation regarding higher education, and I was struck by her poise and professionalism, as well as her personal story. I'd like to congratulate Ms. Fischhoff on an outstanding academic career and to wish her the best in all her future endeavors. It is my pleasure to include in the RECORD, her personal account of her work and advocacy, from her time as an undergraduate student:

My name is Rebekah Fischhoff, and I am currently a senior at Rutgers University graduating from Rutgers-Camden on May 21st, 2025, with a degree in Business Administration. I simultaneously work at Two River Wealth Management Group at Ameriprise Financial as a Client Service Manager three days a week, while studying to become a financial advisor. I was invited to and was inducted into the Rutgers-Camden Chapter of Beta Gamma Sigma Business Honor Society, (an honor by invitation afforded to the top 10% of business students). In addition, this spring as was the case last year, I was again selected to join the Rutgers Advocacy Corps, to lobby and advocate on Capitol Hill for increased investments in federal financial aid. I previously served as the Graduate Trustee on Brookdale Community College's Board of Trustees. My path that led me to Brookdale was fortuitous but was far from planned. My father's health downturn and subsequent long-term rehabilitation, coupled with his income loss, altered my original plans to attend either the College of William & Mary or the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland, forcing me to change plans. I was fortunate to qualify for the New Jersey STARS Program, a program that allows academically qualified students to attend tuition-free for up to five semesters. It wasn't long until a fortuitous introduction led me to join the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society (PTK) and the Honors Program. Soon after I was appointed Vice President of Scholarship for PTK, we were challenged by Brookdale President Dr. David M. Stout to help develop a Peer Mentoring Program for incoming students. As a result of our efforts, I earned a Distinguished Chapter Officer designation at the regional and International PTK Conventions. Feeling the obligation to repay Brookdale for the successes it afforded me, I saw that opportunity presented if I were able to win the election for the Graduate Trustee position. With the good fortune of being supported by those who believed in me, I won the election and by taking Rutgers classes here at the Brookdale campus, I found a way to stay engaged in the school that I love and to repay in a small way, my gratitude.

After I took office as a Graduate Trustee, I actively engaged with Brookdale's student body and advocated and championed various interests. This included promoting awareness of the transferability process and requirements, enhancing the expansion and marketing of our Honors Program, the ongoing growth and development of the peer mentoring program, improving financial literacy resources for all students, ensuring student satisfaction with the advising department, and emphasizing the importance of soft skills and interpersonal abilities. With the help of President Dr. David M. Stout, we revived the Graduate Trustee Advisory Council on campus. This initiative will play a pivotal role in enhancing student involvement and engagement in the college's decision-making processes. The purpose of this council is to

bring together a diverse cohort—dedicated and committed—fostering multiple perspectives of the student body. By amplifying student voices, this initiative ensures their concerns are heard but also prepares future leaders, providing them with invaluable experiential learning opportunities. Serving on this council could serve as a catalyst for inspiring students to pursue the Graduate Trustee position themselves, ensuring a succession of well-prepared and confident representatives on the Board. This program will enhance the effectiveness of serving as Graduate Trustee by adequately hearing the voice of the student body while also affording members the opportunity to engage in the process. The Board of Trustees has been very supportive of this program, and it is set to become a permanent fixture of the college, ensuring the serving Graduate Trustee is better equipped to bring the voice of the students to the table.

Among the various initiatives that I advocated for during my term, the importance of the transferability of credits process was especially important to me. Community colleges and four-year institutions need to be better aligned to ensure a streamlined process of the transferability of credits. Many students go to community college for affordability, proximity, or the desire to explore programs and interests, but students need transparency early on about whether these credits will transfer. Students may take courses at the community college but later find out that those courses won't transfer to the four-year institution, wasting students' time, money, energy—and if the students are on financial aid, they're also wasting federal funding. Students are essentially using the federal funding twice if they need to retake a course because the credits would not transfer.

One bill that had been introduced last Congress, H.R. 2957, "Utilize Accountability and Transparency Policies that Reflect Needs of Community Colleges could help this issue because this bill would hold the four-year institutions accountable for how many credits will transfer and how much won't. There are limited resources online regarding the transferability of credits, highlighting the significance of this bill being enacted. This lack of transparency affects many areas including student satisfaction, how long they'll stay in school, how much federal aid they'll use, the cost of college, and when they'll graduate. Students are hard-pressed for time and needing and using this federal funding twice is a waste. Similar legislation will encourage and influence these four-year institutions to accept more credits and transferability pathways because they will be held accountable.

HONORING STAFF SERGEANT  
JESSE TAYLOR OF ANDERSON,  
SOUTH CAROLINA

HON. SHERI BIGGS

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Mrs. BIGGS of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable American, a decorated combat veteran, and a steadfast advocate for our Nation's heroes—Staff Sergeant Jesse Taylor of Anderson, South Carolina.

Mr. Jesse Taylor was born in Waycross, Georgia, where he grew up enjoying the outdoors and playing sports. After graduating high school in 1963, he enlisted in the United States Army. He completed his Basic and Ad-

vanced Individual Training at Fort Gordon, Georgia, earned his Airborne wings at Fort Benning, and joined the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

He later completed jungle warfare training in Panama before deploying to Vietnam in 1967. Serving with Cutthroat Company, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division, Staff Sergeant Taylor fought in some of the most difficult terrain and combat conditions of the war, including operations in Phan Rang and the Central Highlands.

For his extraordinary bravery in combat, Mr. Jesse Taylor was awarded the Silver Star—the third-highest military decoration for valor—presented to him by then-Vice President Hubert Humphrey. It is a recognition few receive, and one that speaks volumes about his courage and sacrifice.

When Staff Sergeant Jesse Taylor returned home, like so many Vietnam veterans, he carried the weight of war with him. But instead of turning away from that burden, he chose to turn toward others. He founded Vets Helping Vets Anderson, a grassroots group that brings veterans together every Wednesday morning. What began as a small circle of 14 has grown into a community made up of hundreds of men and women from every branch of service, bound together by shared experience and mutual support.

Through this effort, Mr. Jesse Taylor has helped build a place of healing and strength for veterans across Upstate South Carolina. His steady leadership, honesty, and compassion have made a profound difference in the lives of those who served—and I want to say personally, it's made a difference in mine as well.

Hearing the stories shared in that room and seeing the way Mr. Jesse Taylor uplifts others simply by showing up with open arms and a listening ear, has deepened my own understanding of what service truly means. It's not just about what we do in uniform—it's how we carry that spirit forward into our communities, day after day.

Mr. Speaker, Staff Sergeant Jesse Taylor embodies the highest ideals of service not only in battle, but in how he continues to serve others with dignity, humility, and heart. I am honored to represent him in Congress, proud to recognize his life and legacy in the official record of this chamber, and even prouder to call Mr. Jesse a close friend.

May God bless Jesse Taylor, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

HONORING THE PRINCE WILLIAM  
COUNTY, VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT  
OF PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICA-  
TIONS VALOR AWARD RECIPI-  
ENTS

HON. EUGENE SIMON VINDMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Mr. VINDMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate the Prince William County Department of Public Safety Communications Valor Award recipients, recognizing the extraordinary dedication of who serve as the critical first link in emergency response. These awards reflect the calm, skilled, and courageous actions of these professionals, often the