

against which they have no natural defenses. Invasive species have drastically impacted agriculture in Hawaii, threatening some of the island's most valuable crops in the state's third-largest industry.

Another prime and very current example of the challenges we face is the coconut rhinoceros beetle. It has become a menacing invader in Hawaii, wreaking havoc on the islands' palm trees and posing a serious threat to both the environment and the economy. This formidable beetle, with its massive size and powerful mandibles, burrows into the trunks of coconut palms and other tropical crops, such as kalo and bananas, causing extensive damage. According to the Hawaii Invasive Species Council, once the beetles bore into these plants, they can kill them, jeopardizing the entire ecosystem, agriculture and food security.

The destruction of coconut palms by the beetle is especially harmful. These trees are vital to Hawaii's agricultural production, supplying coconuts for food, cosmetics and traditional practices. Additionally, they serve as iconic symbols of the islands' tropical landscape. With no natural predators to keep its numbers in check, the beetle's rapid spread continues to outpace control efforts, making it a growing crisis for Hawaii's environment, economy and cultural heritage.

Yet despite these incontrovertible and growing impacts of external species on Hawaii's natural resources and economy, existing federal law leaves Hawaii largely defenseless against increasingly destructive invasives.

Imports by air and sea, the only means of in-bound transportation to our island state, lack any effective regulation to screen out invasives. This is despite a fairly rigorous screening of exports from Hawaii to the Continental United States to screen out invasives from Hawaii viewed as harmful to mainland agriculture (invasives that, ironically, were invasives into Hawaii to start with).

Our bill, the Hawaii Invasive Species Protection Act, will require the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS), in cooperation with other federal departments and the State of Hawaii, to conduct visual, x-ray and canine inspections, as appropriate, on person, baggage, cargo and any other article destined for direct movement to the State of Hawaii. The inspections will search for high-risk invasive species and agricultural materials. The inspections will be conducted at airports, ports and postal sorting facilities prior to direct travel to the State of Hawaii.

Our bill further requires APHIS to work with the State of Hawaii to develop and publish a list of the high-risk invasive species and agricultural materials for the State of Hawaii. It pays for these inspections by increasing Agriculture Quarantine Inspection fees to cover the full cost of inspection.

If we truly care about the threat that continued and escalating invasive species pose to one of the most invaluable and unique ecosystems on earth, in addition to our unique economy and way of life, then the stark reality is that this bill is what it will take. Again, it is not revolutionary when compared to other island countries, most notably New Zealand, that have not only recognized this threat but actually have done something about it.

And it is certainly not revolutionary when compared to longstanding domestic restric-

tions on exports from Hawaii, leading to the basic point that if these invasive species prevention requirements are good enough for the rest of the country and much of the world then they're good enough for Hawaii.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to this House for their understanding and careful consideration of Hawaii's challenge and opportunity and ask for our bill's expeditious passage.

HONORING THE 40TH ANNUAL DR.
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
YOUTH ORATORICAL COMPETITION

HON. EUGENE SIMON VINDMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 16, 2025

Mr. VINDMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 40th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Youth Oratorical Contest, hosted by the Prince William County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated.

Since 1985, the members of the Prince William County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. have hosted this community event in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. This year marks the 40th anniversary of this meaningful tradition. This event has evolved into a youth oratorical competition, bringing together students in grades 6–12 from Prince William County Public Schools and surrounding areas. It offers students with a unique opportunity to research, write, and deliver an oration that honors the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. King's legacy continues to inspire people of all ages, including today's youth. His commitment to justice, equality, and nonviolence has profoundly shaped our Nation, urging us to confront injustice and work for a future where all treated with dignity and respect.

This year's speech topic: "Fulfilling the Promise of Democracy: My Voice, My Choice, My Future," is inspired by Dr. King's powerful call for America to live up the ideals of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence by being "true to what you said on paper."

I congratulate the following contestants in the 40th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Youth Oratorical Contest: Middle School Contestants: Soluchi Eze—Benton Middle School; Chizaram Feliz-Ujorji—Pennington Traditional School; Ezana Tesfaye—Mary G. Porto Traditional School. High School Contestants: Jordyn Nesbitt—Gainesville High School; Rabab Raza—Osborn High School; Naomi Samuel—Battlefield High School.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in commending the Prince William County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. for showcasing the power of Dr. King's tireless commitment to equality and in congratulating the talented students of the 2025 MLK Youth Oratorical Contest. Let us learn from this next generation and consider how we may honor Dr. King's legacy by continuously seeking justice and leading with light in our own communities.

HONORING HOWARD KOCH'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

HON. J. LUIS CORREA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 16, 2025

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Howard Koch, a World War II and Korean War veteran who is celebrating his 100th birthday on January 19, 2025.

Raised in Oakland, California, Koch developed a love of skiing and rock climbing at a young age—skills that would eventually lead to his unique call to service during WWII in the 10th Mountain Division. At 13 years old, Koch learned to ski at the Donner Summit Sugar Bowl Ski Resort, paying for lessons with money he earned from his paper route. His dad would drop him at the Southern Pacific train station and, with rented skis in hand, he would ride up the mountain by himself. He would arrive early in the morning and sleep in the snow until the slopes were open for skiing. Koch soon learned to make his own skis and began his life as an outdoorsman as a member of the Sierra Club.

After graduating from high school at 16 years old, Koch attended UC Berkeley as a geology/mining engineering major. A natural athlete, Koch played baseball and was a right guard on the football squad. He still remembers winning a game against USC at the Los Angeles Coliseum.

By the time he turned 18 in 1943, the United States had been at war for two years and he knew he would be drafted. The military was advertising for volunteers who could ski and rock climb to join a division that, at the time, was called the Ski Troops. Eventually renamed to the 10th Mountain Division, this group was America's only mountain and winter warfare fighting unit.

Koch knew this Army unit was where he belonged. He was sent to Camp Hale in Colorado, high in the Rockies to join an elite group of champion skiers, mountain climbers, and European mountaineers for training. In what would be its biggest victory, the 10th completed a night climb on Riva Ridge to land a surprise attack against German troops who were entrenched in the snowy mountains of Italy.

After climbing Riva Ridge, a famous battle that is documented in the film "Fire On The Mountain," Koch was field promoted to 1st Lieutenant and went on with his Division to help capture Mount Belvedere. Soon after, Koch became ill and was sent to the hospital in Livorno, where he stayed for several weeks and then sent back to his company near Torbole.

Before the Nazis surrendered to the 10th Mountain Division commanders, the company commander was injured. At the urging of the sergeants in Koch's platoon, Lt. Colonel Henry Hampton appointed Koch as "acting company commander." He was 20 years old and the youngest 1st Lieutenant. Koch retained this status through the surrender and was then sent with his troops to Slovenia, where he ran a climbing school to keep the soldiers fit and to train replacement troops.

In July 1945, Koch was shipped back state-side to train for amphibious landings with the intent of being shipped to North Tokyo Bay to help end the war. While heading home, the war drew to a close.

After being released from the Army in May 1946, Koch joined the Army Reserve and returned to UC Berkley to earn an accounting degree. In 1948, he met and married Averil, who would be his wife of 72 and a half years. He was working as a successful businessman when, in August of 1950, he was called to active duty for the Korean War. Koch trained as an infantry officer—but once the Army found out about his accounting degree, he was stationed in Japan as a budget and finance officer to oversee the numerous military projects in post-war Japan. When his discharge came, he declined the offer of being promoted to Major so that he could return to his wife.

Koch always kept in touch with his 10th Mountain Division buddies and attended several reunions, including the 50th anniversary re-enactment climb up Riva Ridge that included some of the German soldiers he helped capture. While he remembers the atrocities of war, Koch cherishes the fellowship and camaraderie of his fellow Mountain Soldiers. He will still sing the ballads the 10th sang when they were warming themselves by a fire or hiking miles in the snow.

I ask my colleagues to join me in wishing Howard Koch a happy 100th birthday, and in thanking him for a century of service to our country and our community.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 16, 2025

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, due to travel restrictions related to my pregnancy, I was unable to travel to D.C. to vote. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 8 and YEA on Roll Call No. 9.