

Amelia has overcome many challenges along her journey to success, demonstrating perseverance at every step. Students who strive to make the most of their education, like Amelia, develop crucial skills and a work ethic that will guide them for the rest of their lives. This award is a testament to Amelia's hard work, determination, and perseverance at Warren Tech North and is clearly just the beginning of a bright and promising future.

It is my honor to congratulate Amelia Brown on achieving the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth Award.

HONORING KATE MILLER

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kate Miller, the Executive Director of the Napa Valley Transportation Authority (NVTa). After 12 years of service at NVTa, Ms. Miller is retiring, ending her 30 year career in transportation and leaving behind a lasting impact on our Napa County community and the broader Bay Area.

Born and raised in the Bay Area, Ms. Miller earned a Bachelor of Arts in U.S. and International Studies from the University of Washington and a Master's in Public Administration, Urban Studies, and Transportation from San Francisco State University. She began her career in transportation in 2000 at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, where she worked as a Senior Planner before moving to AC Transit as the Manager of Capital Development, Legislation, and Grants. In 2012, she became Executive Director of NVTa.

Ms. Miller's leadership at NVTa has resulted in significant improvements to our Napa County's transportation infrastructure. She led the passage of Measure U, a sales tax expected to generate \$1.2 billion over 30 years for local streets and road projects. Under her direction, NVTa completed the \$56 million Soscol Junction Interchange, reducing traffic congestion and improving mobility. She also played a key role in expanding the Napa Valley Vine Trail, securing funding, and guiding its construction from Napa to Yountville and from Calistoga to St. Helena.

Ms. Miller oversaw the operations of Vine Transit, which serves over 600,000 passengers annually and connects Napa County to Vallejo Ferry, Amtrak, and BART. During the 2017 Tubbs Fire, Vine Transit worked with emergency services to evacuate residents and visitors while maintaining limited bus service, earning NVTa and its partners the Bay Area Metro (Grand) Award from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in 2019. The agency later provided similar emergency response efforts during the 2020 Glass Fire. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Vine Transit also played a critical role by delivering meals to shelters and isolation sites, transporting high-risk individuals to quarantine facilities, assisting emergency staff, and ensuring access to testing and vaccination sites for those without transportation.

Beyond our Napa Valley community, Ms. Miller has been a key voice in statewide transportation policy. She served as Chair of the Bay Area Partnership Board at the Metropol-

itan Transportation Commission and was appointed to the California Transit Transformation Task Force, where she worked on long-term funding solutions and operational improvements for public transit. Ms. Miller is also a well-respected mentor, collaborator, and advocate for sustainable transportation. Known for her ability to bring together local governments, agencies, and private partners, she has strengthened Napa's position in regional and statewide transportation planning.

Outside of her professional life, Ms. Miller is a dedicated family member and friend. She has been married to her husband, Greg, for 21 years and is a devoted aunt to her nieces and nephew Ashley, Natalie, and Wesley. A proud Napa resident, Ms. Miller is an cyclist and enjoys spending time with friends, sharing meals, and walking her dog, Lilly, through the streets of Browns Valley.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Miller's leadership has improved transportation infrastructure, expanded transit services, and advanced sustainability efforts in our Napa Valley and beyond. It is fitting and proper that we recognize her contributions here today.

RECOGNIZING PRICILLA CRUZ-SEADO

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding contributions that Pricilla Cruz-Seado has made to our community through her work with New Beginnings Youth Shelter, which serves homeless kids aged 10 to 17 who are between foster homes, abandoned, or homeless. The whole team jumps in to take care of the kids that have no one else looking out for them. They teach kids structure, respect, understanding and so much more in a loving environment. The team really cares, and each member is deeply invested in the kids' long-term success.

It is clear Pricilla Cruz-Seado 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.

HONORING SUNAYANA DUMALA FOR HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO CENTRAL FLORIDA DURING ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, Sunayana Dumala is an Indian immigrant who moved to the United States in 2007 to pursue her master's degree, hopeful about building a new future and achieving the American Dream.

While working as a data integration engineer in Olathe, Kansas, her life was tragically altered on February 22, 2017, when her husband, Srinivas Kuchibhotla, was murdered in a hate crime that shocked the Nation. In the face of unimaginable loss, Sunayana chose to

rise with purpose. She emerged as a leading advocate for immigrants, founding the Forever Welcome Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting immigrant and refugee communities through advocacy, education, and programs that foster unity and bridge diverse communities.

Through Forever Welcome, Sunayana leads dialogue workshops that create space for understanding and connection between immigrants and non-immigrants, and runs a family support program that provides emergency assistance to refugee and low-income immigrant families.

Her advocacy has extended to national platforms. She has worked with Immigration Voice to advance policy solutions for high-skilled immigrants and participated in campaigns like Spread AAPI Love by Stop AAPI Hate.

She has also been featured in national documentaries, including PBS's "Healing Hate" and ABC's "Divided States: Olathe," which highlight her journey and the broader fight against hate. Sunayana's work has earned her honors, including the Heart Award by Med Ad News, the Peace Award from the Crescent Peace Society, and the Humanitarian Award from the Olathe Human Relations Commission.

Apart from focusing on her foundation, since relocating to Lake Nona, Florida, in 2022, Ms. Dumala has been actively involved with Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Coming Together (ACT), a nonprofit organization dedicated to civic engagement and community empowerment. Through her work with ACT, she is helping increase civic engagement and voter awareness across Central Florida.

Sunayana's story is especially remarkable considering that when tragedy struck, she had no immediate family in America, was not born here and was still learning the nuances of American culture. In the face of devastating loss, she had a choice: to turn away from the country that had become her home, or to stay and fight against hate.

Her journey is a testament to resilience, compassion, and a deep commitment to building a country where everyone has a place to belong.

HONORING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HMONG EXODUS

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 50th anniversary of the Hmong Exodus, the mass displacement and migration of Hmong people from Laos to the United States beginning in 1975.

The Hmong people originated in North Central Asia before migrating to Southeast Asia to settle in Laos. Despite achieving independence from French colonial rule in 1954, their relations to foreign powers remained complex, particularly during the Vietnam War. From 1961 and 1975, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), employed a secret army of Hmong soldiers led by General Vang Pao to assist U.S. war efforts during the Vietnam War era. Known as the Special Guerrilla Unit (SGU), they fought in the "Secret War," often against insurmountable odds, to stop the spread of

communism inside and beyond Laos. In one of the most devastating and traumatic wars in our nation's history, the Hmong people bravely fought side by side with U.S. troops resulting in 35,000 SGU casualties.

Following the Paris Peace Accords, all U.S. military personnel exited Southeast Asia in 1973, but General Vang Pao and the SGU remained. Laos was then split into three factions, but after the city of Long Cheng fell in 1975, the communist-backed Pathet Lao seized power and retaliated against the CIA-sponsored soldiers and their families. This forced an estimated 20,000 Hmong to flee to Thailand to avoid persecution before relocating to the United States. This marked the first wave of the Hmong Exodus, in which over 100,000 Hmong emigrated to the U.S. between 1975 and 1997. They settled primarily in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

Today, the Hmong population in the United States is approximately 345,000. The City of Fresno has the second-largest Hmong population in the country, behind only Minneapolis, with roughly 35,000 people living in the region. To recognize their cultural, social, political, and economic contributions to the city, Mayor Jerry Dyer proclaimed May 14th as Hmong American Day in Fresno. This day commemorates the anniversary of the final airlift that brought Hmong veterans and their families to the U.S. It also serves as a reminder to celebrate generations of Hmong Americans and their contributions in business, education, government, healthcare, and public safety. Fresno also has the distinction of hosting the largest Hmong New Year celebration in the country, attracting over 100,000 visitors each year.

In the 115th Congress, I introduced the Hmong Veterans' Service Recognition Act to secure burial rights in national cemeteries for SGU veterans. It was signed into law as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 and serves as a symbol of grateful Nation for the service and loyalty of the SGU soldiers and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my esteemed colleagues to join me in commemorating the resilience and enduring spirit of the Hmong people and their contributions to the United States over the last five decades. May their story be our story.

RECOGNIZING AVERY KENKEL

HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Avery Kenkel for earning the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth Award.

Avery has overcome many challenges along her journey to success, demonstrating perseverance at every step. Students who strive to make the most of their education, like Avery, develop crucial skills and a work ethic that will

guide them for the rest of their lives. This award is a testament to Avery's hard work, determination, and perseverance at Wayne Carle Middle School and is clearly just the beginning of a bright and promising future.

It is my honor to congratulate Avery Kenkel on achieving the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth Award.

HONORING INTERNATIONAL HOUSE DAVIS (I-HOUSE)

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize International House Davis (I-House) as the organization celebrates 40 years of service. Since its founding, I-House has helped make our Davis community a more welcoming and inclusive place by building cultural understanding and supporting international residents.

I-House was originally established in 1981 to connect international students attending UC Davis to our greater Davis community. In 1984, the organization opened its permanent location at 10 College Park, which has since become a central space for cultural exchange, language learning, and public programming in our area. What began as a small, volunteer-led effort has grown into a well-established nonprofit reaching thousands of people each year.

Each year, over 250 international residents participate in I-House's English language programs. In addition, more than 2,500 individuals take part in the organization's cultural events and community programs. These include music and dance classes, parenting groups, public speaking workshops, and the I-House World Tour, a program that features cultural traditions from around the world and partners with local organizations to deepen community ties.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, I-House reevaluated its operation norms, and decided to begin work on expanding its programming and reaching a broader cross-section of our Davis community. The organization has since strengthened its support for immigrants, refugees, and newcomers by launching new English language offerings and volunteer-driven initiatives. It has also added more community-led cultural programming, including classes in Persian drumming, French and Peruvian dance, and other areas that reflect the diversity of its participants.

Throughout its four decades of work, I-House Davis has remained committed to the values of community, curiosity, collaboration, culture, and belonging. These principles are reflected in the organization's day-to-day efforts to promote civic engagement, foster cross-cultural understanding, and support individuals as they navigate life in a new place. Whether through language instruction, cultural

exchange, or shared community space, I-House has created opportunities for people from many different backgrounds to learn from one another and feel connected.

As part of its 40th anniversary, I-House has launched a community storytelling project titled "40 Years of Stories," highlighting the organization's history and its continued importance to the region. Under the leadership of Executive Director Shelly Gilbride and a dedicated staff and board, I-House Davis remains a trusted and active presence in the Davis community.

Mr. Speaker, International House Davis has spent four decades promoting cultural exchange and supporting our international and immigrant communities. It is fitting and proper that we recognize the organization today for its 40 years of dedicated service to our district.

RECOGNIZING MERLYN LEWIS

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 3, 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 nonprofit, 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.