

July 3, 2025, at Macedonia Christian Ministries, 3645 Cusseta Road in Columbus Georgia.

Willie James Watkins, I was born Feb 17, 1952, in Columbus, Georgia to the late Jessie Watkins and Susie Grant Watkins. One of seven children, Willie grew up in the Booker T. Washington Apartments, attended 2nd Avenue and 5th Avenue Elementary Schools, Marshall Junior High School and graduated from the William H. Spencer High School in 1970. He was affectionately known as "Mr. Loquacious". Willie was a staunch supporter of the William H. Spencer High School Alumni Association and the Class of 1970 and never missed the activities surrounding the Spencer-Carver sports rivalry events.

Throughout his elementary and secondary education, Willie excelled in athletics. He played baseball, basketball, and ran track for the William H. Spencer Greenwaves. At the age of 10, he started to caddy at the Columbus Lions Club Golf Course on Victory Drive where he learned to play and developed a lifelong love of the game of golf.

Upon graduating from high school, Willie attended Morristown College in Tennessee on a basketball scholarship. He later served in the United States Army and following his discharge returned home to Columbus and entered the insurance profession as a salesman with Life of Georgia Insurance Company and Interstate Insurance company. He became a life underwriter and instructor, teaching classes to prepare countless insurance professionals for certification and licensure.

With his life-long friend from BTW Apartments, Jerome Humphries, golf became a passion. Watching legendary African-American golfers such as Charlie Sifford, Jim Thorpe, Pete Brown, Jim Dent and Bobby Strobe, as caddies on the segregated "Chitlin" golf circuit, they developed skills and ultimately competed professionally on the all black North American Golf Association Tour, traveling through Georgia, Alabama, Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina. They also competed locally in the WOKS Pro-Am Golf Classic, the Purple and Gold Pro-Am Golf Classic and the Victory Drive Golf Classic. Moreover, Willie Watkins and Jerome Humphries founded the Metro Columbus Golf Association in 1987 and promoted charity golf tournaments in support of sickle cell and epilepsy research for the benefit of humanity.

While Willie was well-known for his loquacious personality and sometimes boisterous demeanor, he was a man of deep faith and was an active member of the Fourth Street Missionary Baptist Church from childhood up through the remainder of his life.

On a personal note, Willie was my friend for over 30 years. He was invaluable in his support of the Annual Sanford Bishop Golf Classic for 27 years in both Albany and Columbus. His extraordinary volunteer service contributed mightily to its enduring success. Often Willie and Jerome Humphries traveled with me to play in numerous charity golf tournaments. It was my honor for him to join me in traveling to Augusta National to witness the 2018 Master's which we enjoyed immensely. I will be forever grateful for his friendship and support.

Willie accomplished much in his life but none of it would have been possible without the grace of God and the love and support of his late wife, Patricia D. Watkins; his four children, Marcus Watkins, Willena Watkins Sin-

gleton, Mactrice Watkins Thomas and Willie Watkins, Jr.; his late siblings, Lily Watkins Hopson, Catherine Watkins Jackson, Frank Watkins and Geneva Watkins Burns; his surviving siblings, Ann Watkins Cobb and Jessie Watkins, Jr.; his 8 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren; nieces, nephews, and extended family. Willie loved his family, and his family loved him back.

As we reflect on the remarkable life of Willie James Watkins, we honor and remember his unwavering faith, his love of family, his help to insurance professionals, his Spencer Greenwave spirit, his passion for golf and his impact on our community. We are all better because Willie touched our lives.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join my wife, Vivian, and me, along with the more than 765,000 people of Georgia's 2nd Congressional District in honoring the life and legacy of Mr. Willie James Watkins, in extending our deepest condolences to his family, friends and all who mourn his loss. Moreover, I pray that we will all be consoled and comforted by an abiding faith and the Holy Spirit in the days, weeks and months ahead.

RECOGNIZING AVI BENDER

HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Avi Bender of Arvada, Colorado. Avi was selected as one of 250 high school students across the country to participate in the Department of State's prestigious Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) Program.

Launched in 1983, CBYX selects high achieving youth from both Germany and the United States to live in each other's country for one academic year. During their year abroad, students will foster meaningful relationships between America and Germany, while giving participants new perspectives on peoples and cultures beyond their own. Many CBYX alumni go on to distinguished careers in foreign affairs and public service using the language skills gained through this scholarship program.

This year, Avi will travel to Germany to attend school, live with a host family, and collaborate with the Department of State to promote cultural exchange between Americans and the German people.

On behalf of the people of Colorado's Seventh Congressional District, it is my honor to congratulate Avi Bender for this impressive accomplishment and wish Avi all the best for this upcoming year in Germany.

CONDEMNING THE VIOLENT JUNE 2025 RIOTS IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 27, 2025

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H. Res. 516, the Con-

demning the violent June 2025 riots in Los Angeles, California. It is deeply unfortunate that instead of working with Democrats on a bipartisan resolution to condemn violence, Republicans have instead written a partisan resolution designed to attack elected officials in California. Furthermore, the resolution fails to recognize the premature and escalatory deployment of the National Guard and active-duty Marines by President Trump to Los Angeles.

When the House of Representatives passes a resolution regarding current events, it should do its due diligence to cite the facts. Unfortunately, it is clear the Republican majority had no interest in accurately portraying the protests in Los Angeles when they wrote H. Res. 516. Instead, the resolution perpetuates a false narrative about Democratic elected officials in California. H. Res. 516 states that local elected officials did not adequately respond to the bad actors and trouble-doers. These claims are patently false. Mayor Karen Bass of Los Angeles implemented a multi-day curfew and surged law enforcement resources to downtown Los Angeles to maintain control of the situation. This kept the situation contained to 10 blocks of the downtown area.

But even when the Los Angeles Chief of Police stated that the demonstrations "were nowhere near a level" where the National Guard was needed, President Trump disregarded his opinion and took the escalatory action of deploying 2,000 members of the California National Guard to Los Angeles. Then, on June 10, the President deployed 700 active-duty Marines. Our active-duty military has absolutely no legal role in domestic law enforcement. Los Angeles County has 17,000 law enforcement personnel who are well trained in crowd control. There was no need for the National Guard or the Marines to be deployed by the President, and his decision sets a dangerous precedent for the future.

Republicans had the opportunity to bring a resolution introduced by my colleague, Representative BARRAGAN, condemning violence and bad actors, and thanking local law enforcement for their work. Instead, Republicans chose to use the unrest in Los Angeles to play partisan games and attack Democrats in California.

Mr. Speaker, it is our duty as public servants to tell the truth. We should all stand for condemning violence, de-escalation of force, and the right to peacefully protest. It is unfortunate that this resolution walks away from these principles. I cannot support it.

RECOGNIZING KAPPA ALPHA ORDER'S 81ST CONVENTION

HON. BEN CLINE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 81st Convention of the Kappa Alpha Order, which will be held in Roanoke, the heart of Virginia's Sixth District. It is a distinct honor to welcome this historic brotherhood back to its roots. Kappa Alpha Order was founded on December 21, 1865, in a small room at Washington College, now Washington and Lee University, in Lexington, Virginia.

What began as a bond of friendship has grown into a nationwide organization that continues to promote leadership, service, and

moral integrity. The Order's motto, "Dieu et les Dames," meaning God and the Ladies, reflects its core values. For over 150 years, its members have committed themselves to cultivating character and serving their communities with distinction.

Today, KA's across the country continue to make a meaningful impact through ongoing charitable work, campus leadership, and a life-long commitment to honor and duty. The Order's presence in our local community is a point of pride, and I applaud their continued contributions to the betterment of our society.

HONORING CHEYENNE PECKNE
FOR HER ACTIONS IN SAVING A
LIFE

HON. LLOYD SMUCKER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

Mr. SMUCKER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize Cheyenne Peckne, a 911 operator whose instructions helped coach a wife to give CPR to her husband who had suffered a heart attack.

An often-overlooked role in the first responder community is that of our 911 operators. While not as visible as other first responders, they are the first line of contact and convene the proper authorities during an emergency. They receive calls from distressed individuals and have to act fast with limited information.

Cheyenne is an 18-year-old from York, PA, who started her role as a 911 operator only a

few weeks ago. On May 8, 2025, the Red Lion Area Ambulance Association and Laurel Fire Company received a call for a health emergency. Cheyenne picked up the call, and on the other end, a woman whose husband had suffered a cardiac arrest.

Over the next few minutes, Cheyenne comforted the women and assured her that help was on the way. Cheyenne then began to instruct the women on how to give CPR to her husband. This would continue until first responders were able to reach the home and transport the man to the hospital. While this interaction only took a few minutes, it was crucial to saving the man's life.

In a reception a few weeks after the incident, Cheyenne had the opportunity to meet the family and be recognized for her actions. She stated, "The wife did an amazing job. . . she is the one who saved her husband."

I thank Cheyenne for her remarkable work and commitment to serving the public in this role. We can take comfort in knowing that she will continue to help members of our community in times of crisis.

RECOGNIZING MR. RAY FLETCHER

HON. BRANDON GILL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

Mr. GILL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commend Mr. Ray Fletcher of Cooke County, Texas, for a lifetime of devoted service to our nation, The Great State of Texas, and his local community.

Mr. Fletcher first answered the call to serve when he joined the United States Air Force in 1981, where he trained and served as a Nuclear Weapons Specialist. Over the course of an honorable 22-year military career, he rose to the rank of Senior Master Sergeant, exemplifying leadership, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to the security of our country. He retired from active duty in 2003, but his public service was far from over.

Immediately upon retirement, Mr. Fletcher began his second career in direct service to the people of Cooke County as the Emergency Manager and Fire Marshal. In this role, which he held for an additional 22 years, he became a cornerstone of public safety and emergency preparedness in North Texas. Mr. Fletcher led Cooke County through seven federally declared disasters, investigated over 400 fires, and oversaw numerous other critical incidents that required his seasoned judgment and calm leadership. Among his many accomplishments, Mr. Fletcher was instrumental in coordinating the Individual Safe Room Grant Program, a vital initiative that led to the installation of 425 storm shelters across Cooke County. His foresight and dedication undoubtedly made Cooke County a safer place for all who call it home.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Ray Fletcher's contributions to his country and community reflect the very best of American values. I am proud to represent such a distinguished citizen in the 26th Congressional District of Texas. On behalf of a grateful community, I thank him for his selfless service and wish him continued happiness in his well-earned retirement.