

he helped respond to questions from Members and staff throughout Capitol Hill. Matt returned to my team as a Staff Assistant and Legislative Correspondent. From there, he embarked on a remarkable career with our office, holding nearly every position—from Staff Assistant to Legislative Correspondent to Legislative Assistant, and even a brief stint as Scheduler—until he ultimately became Press Secretary for both my office and the House Judiciary Committee from 2023 to 2025.

Throughout his tenure, Matt brought an impressive blend of professionalism, creativity, and humor to the role. As Press Secretary, he worked tirelessly behind the scenes, ensuring that my office's messages were clear, concise, and timely. He is an excellent writer and worked quickly to ensure our communications were relevant and far-reaching. He continuously found ways to elevate our communications—from quick video clips to informative electronic updates, to printed newsletters. Matt worked to prepare me for appearances on MSNBC, NY1, and other local New York City television news programs. He worked closely with reporters to book interviews with major news outlets like the New York Times and the Washington Post.

Matt's commitment to learning led him to be an active and consistent participant in the many communications classes offered in the House—even serving as an instructor from time to time. He routinely briefed his Democratic press colleagues on the many Judiciary Committee bills that came to the House floor each week and worked to coordinate the party message on major legislation facing the Congress.

However, his contributions went far beyond just communications. He was always ready to go the extra mile for the team—whether it was accompanying me to events, moderating my town hall, or heading up the Party Planning Committee. His energy was contagious, and his commitment never wavered.

In 2022, Matt took a leave of absence from my official office to be boots on the ground in New York City (NYC) assisting with my reelection campaign. He was a staple at many NYC subway stops, canvassing and connecting with constituents. His hard work and organizing skill helped propel me to a 30-point victory over a fellow Democratic Committee Chair in a tough New York primary.

During his time in my office, Matt made the most of the many experiences available in D.C. From joining me at the White House bill signing ceremony for my Respect for Marriage Act, to escorting Former President Obama during the 2024 Inauguration, Matt was always willing to seize the opportunity.

A proud University Albany alum and Long Islander, Matt brought the New York spirit to our office. Given his love for New York, Matt was always happy to help at events in the district, and I have particularly fond memories of marching with him in the New York Pride.

Like many of my constituents, Matt is a frequent visitor to Fire Island Pines, but even a day by the beach won't stop him from creating excellent communications content.

While it's impossible to overstate Matt's loss from my team, I'm glad to know he's staying on the Hill. I look forward to running into him in the Longworth Cafeteria and am excited to see where his career takes him.

HONORING THE 100TH BIRTHDAY  
OF AN AMERICAN HERO, SER-  
GEANT FRANK S. WRIGHT

### HON. JOSH HARDER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 10, 2025*

Mr. HARDER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate the 100th birthday of an American hero, Sergeant Frank S. Wright of Lodi, California. As one of the last surviving members of the original United States Marine Corps Raiders, Sergeant Wright stands as a living testament to the courage, resilience, and dedication to country.

Born in 1924 in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, Sergeant Wright answered the call to serve his country following the attack on Pearl Harbor. At just 16 years old, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps—using a delayed birth certificate and a clever diet of bananas to meet age and weight requirements. His journey took him through boot camp in San Diego and ultimately led to his selection as one of the original Marine Raiders—a pioneering special operations force whose legacy would later inspire the formation of today's elite Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC).

During World War II, Sergeant Wright served with distinction in the Pacific Theater, including in the battles of Guam and Iwo Jima. He was wounded multiple times in close combat, including gunshot wounds at Iwo Jima, where he witnessed the iconic raising of the American flag on Mount Suribachi. Over the course of the war, he served aboard 11 naval vessels and fought in four major campaigns.

Sergeant Wright's valor is recognized by a host of military decorations, including the Purple Heart with two stars, the Combat Action Ribbon with four stars, the Presidential Unit Citation with two stars, and several campaign and service medals. His commitment to the Marine Corps extended beyond the battlefield—he closed out his military service as a Drill Instructor, shaping the next generation of Marines.

Following the war, Sergeant Wright settled in Lodi, where he has lived for decades as a proud veteran and community member. In 2019, he published his memoir, *Battles in the Pacific*, offering a firsthand account of his wartime experiences. In 2022, he returned to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego for the first time since boot camp, honored by the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Sergeant Frank Wright is a Central Valley treasure and a national symbol of American grit and resilience. I am proud to recognize his lifetime of service and sacrifice, and to celebrate his extraordinary 100th birthday. May his legacy continue to inspire future generations.

CELEBRATING WILLA ROBINSON  
AND THE LEGACY OF WILLA'S  
BOOKS & VINYL

### HON. EMANUEL CLEAVER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 10, 2025*

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the remarkable life and legacy of Miss

Willia Robinson, the founder and steward of Willa's Books & Vinyl, a cultural cornerstone that has stood for 30 years as a beacon of knowledge, dignity, and Black heritage in Kansas City, Missouri. At 84 years old, Miss Robinson is retiring, but her impact, much like the stories she helped preserve, will live in perpetuity.

Miss Robinson's journey with books began in her hometown, Happy Bend, Arkansas. While attending high school in the town, Miss Robinson's desire to uplift others through books was cultivated when she asked her teacher where she could learn about the contributions of Black people to American life. She was told, plainly and painfully, that there were none. Rather than accept that answer, Miss Robinson began collecting books. Her collection started modestly with a few children's titles in which young Black boys and girls could see themselves reflected in the pages.

After graduating high school at 17, Miss Robinson moved to Kansas City in search of opportunity. She came alone, determined to build a better future, and brought with her a dream to showcase Black literature. In time, she married Cledwell Robinson Sr., raised five children, and worked faithfully for the United States Postal Service for nearly three decades. At the USPS, Miss Robinson learned the rhythms of her community, met with people from all walks of life, and began to share the books she had been collecting since high school.

In 1998, during her time at the post office, Miss Robinson experienced the tragic bereavement of her daughter and granddaughter. Despite the grave loss she experienced, she turned her grief into purpose. Miss Robinson began travelling to Salvation Army locations throughout Missouri, rescuing books that others had overlooked. She first sold them from a table at the post office where she worked, but when new federal building restrictions displaced her, she did not abandon her passion. Instead, Miss Robinson began selling her books as a street vendor at the historic 18th & Vine Jazz District, eventually leading to her permanent storefront Willa's Books & Vinyl, which first opened its doors in 2009.

What Miss Robinson created was more than a bookstore, it was a sanctuary. Now located on Troost Avenue, a road long seen as the racial dividing line between east and west Kansas City, Willa's Books & Vinyl became a living archive of African American history and culture. Inside, one could find rare editions, including works by Frederick Douglass, vintage jazz LPs, 45s of soul music, and early issues of historic Black publications. Her collection eventually grew to over 20,000 works. Ensuring these titles ended up in caring hands was an act of resistance, remembrance, and radical love.

What truly makes Willa's Books & Vinyl sacred is what it represents—a space for conversation, education, and community. For three decades, it has welcomed the curious and the committed. Willa's gave countless young people their first introduction to Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, and other titans of Black literature. The store helped college students, local artists, historians, and everyday neighbors reconnect with the richness of Black thought and scholarship.

In Missouri, Willa's Books & Vinyl holds the distinction of being the oldest and longest-

standing Black-owned bookstore in the state. In a nation where Black bookstores have dwindled, where history is too often erased or edited to appease those in power, Willa Robinson stood firm in her mission to make Black stories visible. As she steps into retirement, we must take a moment to not only congratulate Miss Robinson, but to thank her. Thank her for never giving up, for keeping the books alive, and for showing generations of Missourians that literature is more than leisure, it is a form of liberation. Her legacy, rooted in resilience and powered by purpose, cannot be measured in the number of books sold or even the thousands of titles she preserved. It is measured in the minds she opened, the narratives she protected, and the history she helped write.

So today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Miss Willa Robinson for her immeasurable contributions to the cultural, educational, and spiritual life of Kansas City and beyond. As a teenager, Miss Robinson asked a teacher about Black Americans' contributions to our nation's history and was told there were none. From that point forward, she dedicated her life to proving just the opposite. Willa's Books & Vinyl may have started with a question and a few books, but it became a movement. One that will continue to echo for generations.

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF SENECA EAST HIGH SCHOOL'S BOYS 4 X 800 METER RELAY TEAM FOR WINNING THE DIVISION III STATE TRACK AND FIELD TITLE**

**HON. ROBERT E. LATTA**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 10, 2025*

Mr. Latta. Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of pride that I rise to pay a very special tribute to an outstanding high school track and field relay team in Ohio's Fifth Congressional District. The young men of the Seneca East High School Boys 4 x 800 Meter Relay team have represented their school ably on their way to achieving the Division III State Track and Field Title. The team overcame the challenges posed by intense competition in their effort to surpass all other relay teams in their event.

In pursuing the State Championship, Evan Schiefer, Bradley Smith, Ayden Perkins, and Owen Gahrng defeated their outstanding competitors to win with an impressive time of 7:57.32, a new school record. The members of this very special team have shown that their sport requires an individual effort for a team result. Their hard work and dedication, both on and off the track, in achieving this accomplishment should be commended.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the Seneca East High Boys 4 x 800 Meter Relay team. On behalf of the people of the Fifth District of Ohio, I am proud to recognize this great achievement.

HONORING WILLA SHANNON

**HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 10, 2025*

Mr. Wittman. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Willa Shannon and her service and contributions to Virginia's First District and the Nation.

Willa joined my office as Press Assistant after working for Congressman Bob Latta of Ohio. She has served our office and our team well. Willa is a highly motivated individual who was energetic about both her work and her relationships. Her work ethic and commitment to service have helped shape my staff into the most effective and successful team on Capitol Hill.

I would like to thank Willa for her many contributions and dedicated service. She has been an invaluable member of my team, and I wish her the best of luck as she moves on to the next chapter of her professional career. May the Lord bless her as she embarks on a new challenge, and I look forward to seeing her continued success in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join me to recognize Willa Shannon for her service to Virginia's First District and the Nation.

HONORING THE LIFE OF JEFFREY RICHARD SOTH

**HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 10, 2025*

Mr. Fitzpatrick. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor the life of a dear friend and a giant in the fight for America's workers: Jeff Soth.

Jeff wasn't just a leader in labor, he was a force. As the Legislative and Political Director of the International Union of Operating Engineers, he stood at the helm of one of the most skilled and essential workforces in the world. From power plants and pipelines to roads, bridges, and cranes, the men and women Jeff represented built this country, and he fought for them with everything he had.

Jeff believed, as I do, that labor isn't a special interest, it is the American interest. He understood a fundamental truth: when labor leads, America leads. And because of Jeff, more workers gained access to world-class training. More families found stability, opportunity, and dignity. And more communities saw positive progress and growth.

Over the course of many years working alongside Jeff in our shared mission to champion America's working families, we built a friendship grounded in mutual respect and a deep sense of purpose. We began as partners in the fight, but I stand here today, honored to have called him a dear friend. Jeff was steadfast, sincere, and one of the most loyal people I have ever known. His laughter could lift a room. His word was gold, and his moral compass never wavered.

From serving as mayor of his hometown in Snohomish, Washington, to becoming one of the most respected labor voices in the country—Jeff's prolific career was a testament to what public service should be: selfless, principled, and tireless.

To his family, friends, colleagues, and his IUOE brothers and sisters—I offer my deepest condolences. No words can fill the void he leaves behind. But his legacy lives on in every worker who finds a path, in every project that lifts a community, and in every fight for fairness still ahead.

May God bless Jeff, may He comfort all who mourn him, and may we continue the work Jeff loved, with honor, conviction, and heart.

REMEMBERING JOEL NELSEN

**HON. VINCE FONG**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 10, 2025*

Mr. Fong. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Joel Nelsen, who passed away on July 1, 2025, at the age of 78. For nearly four decades, he served as President of California Citrus Mutual, where he became a leading voice for citrus growers in California and throughout the Nation.

From 1982 to 2019, Mr. Nelsen led California Citrus Mutual through significant challenges to and changes in the agricultural landscape. He worked to ensure citrus growers were represented in key policy decisions related to water, trade, pest management, regulation, and beyond. His efforts helped strengthen the industry and protect the long-term viability of farming in the Central Valley.

Throughout his career, Joel built relationships across the agricultural community, in Sacramento, and in Washington, D.C. He believed in the future of Central Valley agriculture and worked to support family farms and the people who rely on them. He also took time to mentor others in the industry and help prepare the next generation of advocates and leaders.

Joel Nelsen will be remembered for his deep knowledge of the Citrus industry, his decades of service, and his unwavering commitment to the growers he represented. I have no doubt that his legacy will last generations.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring Joel Nelsen for his lifelong dedication to California agriculture and the citrus industry.

RECOGNIZING THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE EXCHANGE SERVICE

**HON. MARC A. VEASEY**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 10, 2025*

Mr. Veasey. Mr. Speaker, I honor the Army & Air Force Exchange Service, the Department of Defense's largest retailer, as the organization reaches a tremendous milestone, 130 years of serving the military community.

Since July 25, 1895, the Exchange has lived out its motto of "We Go Where You Go," providing the best tastes of home to Soldiers, Airmen and Guardians around the world. The Exchange, also known as the PX or BX, is a thriving tax-free benefit that strengthens our nation's military lethality. The Exchange serves those who serve with department stores, restaurants, malls, wellness services, combat uniforms at cost, school meals for military children overseas, a robust presence at