

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 Gahring 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

ShopMyExchange.com, a leading credit option and more.

At 130, the Exchange, now based in Dallas, Texas, is among the oldest U.S. retailers in America—and remains a vital part of military readiness. 100 percent of Exchange earnings support critical Quality-of-Life programs. In the last 10 years, the Exchange delivered \$15 billion in value to the military community.

Congratulations to the Exchange on 130 years of serving those who serve. Here's to "going where you go" for many more years to come.

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF MARION
LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL'S BOYS 4 X
400 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 Marion Local High School Boys 4 x 400 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, Oliver Huelsman, Justin Knouff, Andrew Pohlman, and Victor Hoelscher defeated their outstanding competitors to win with an impressive time of 3:21.06. 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 Marion Local High Boys 4 x 400 Meter Relay team. On behalf of the people of the Fifth District of Ohio, I am proud to recognize this great achievement.

HONORING JOSIE MOTA GOMEZ

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 2025

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Josie Mota Gomez, a visionary in education, lifelong advocate for youth, and social justice. For more than three decades, Josie has been a pillar of the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, located in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, her hometown.

Josie's journey began on a snowy day in February 1975, when she arrived in New York City from the Dominican Republic to reunite with her mother, Melida, who labored for years in a factory to provide a better future for her children. That act of sacrifice would leave an indelible mark on Josie, instilling in her the values of strength, perseverance and service. Accordingly, she began her formal education

at Our Savior School in Williamsburg, learning English and discovering the value of community in a building that would later become home to El Puente Academy—the very school she would help shape decades later.

After attending the High School of Fashion Industries, Josie pursued her passion for communication and earned a degree in Speech Communications from Pace University. A brief stint in the corporate world left her unfulfilled—but a chance meeting with El Puente co-founders Dr. Frances Lucerna and Luis Garden-Acosta changed everything. In 1991, she joined El Puente as a community liaison, launching a lifelong commitment to youth, education, and social justice.

In 1993, Josie played a critical role in the founding of the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, the first public high school in the country centered on human rights and social justice. She has served the school for 32 of its 34-year history—guiding students, families, and fellow educators through every transition and triumph. Her leadership has shaped the Academy's identity, grounded in the belief that we are not just here to study history, but to make history.

Along the way, she earned a master's in education from Long Island University and a bilingual counseling license from Brooklyn College, yet she has always been defined not by titles, but by the deep relationships she has built. Josie walks with young people and their families, lifting them up, meeting them where they are, and helping them believe in their own power.

El Puente is not just a workplace for Josie—it is her family. Her four children were raised in its community, and her unwavering presence has come to symbolize its mission. Josie's journey is a testament to the immigrant experience rooted in sacrifice, shaped by resilience and driven by the hope of a better future.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Josie Mota Gomez on this special occasion of her retirement. I extend my deepest gratitude for her public service and wish her joy in this next chapter of life.

**HONORING AND REMEMBERING
THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO
PASSED AWAY IN A PLANE
CRASH IN HOWLAND TOWNSHIP,
OHIO**

HON. MICHAEL A. RULLI

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 2025

Mr. RULLI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and remember the victims of the June 29, 2025, plane crash in Howland Township, Ohio, that claimed six lives.

This tragic loss has taken beloved family members and respected professionals who contributed significantly to the Mahoning Valley. Their influence on the community will endure for generations.

James Weller was the President and CEO of Liberty Steel Industries Inc., a staple of Warren, Ohio. His passion for his faith and his family inspired him to treat others with respect and dignity.

Veronica Weller, James's wife, was a loving wife, mother, sister, aunt, and friend, making

the community around her a better place. Veronica's involvement with charities showed her true devotion to those in need.

John Weller, son of James and Veronica Weller, was known for his humor and positive outlook on life, spreading love and positivity to those who knew him. John Weller was the vice president of Liberty Steel Industries.

Maria Weller, John's wife, was a volunteer at the St. Edward's food pantry, showing her dedication and love for the community that she sought to make better. Maria's creation of a fashion camp designed to help STEM students showed her willingness to give her time and energy to serve others.

Joseph Maxin, the pilot of the airplane, used his enthusiasm for public service to positively touch the hearts and minds of those he interacted with. Joseph's service in the Youngstown Prosecutor's Office showed his desire and eagerness to keep his community safe.

Timothy Blake, the co-pilot of the airplane, used his fondness for aviation to train the next generation of pilots at Youngstown-Warren Regional Airport.

I ask my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives to join me in honoring and remembering those who lost their lives in this tragic incident.

**HONORING FRIENDSHIP AFRICAN
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN CLARKSDALE, MISSISSIPPI**

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 2025

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate a remarkable institution of faith, history, and service: Friendship African Methodist Episcopal Church in Clarksdale, Mississippi. For more than a century and a half, Friendship AME Church has stood as a steadfast pillar of spiritual leadership, community empowerment, and social justice.

Founded in 1869 by Reverend Thomas W. Stringer, one of the pioneering leaders of the AME Church in Mississippi, Friendship AME has served not only as a sanctuary of worship but as a beacon of hope and advocacy in the Clarksdale community. The land upon which the church was first built was generously given by John Clark, the founder of Clarksdale, and it became home to the first school for Black children in the area—underscoring its early commitment to education and equality.

During the turbulent years of the Civil Rights Movement, Friendship AME provided refuge and became a center for organizing efforts that sought to dismantle segregation and promote justice. It welcomed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. Jesse Jackson, and countless other leaders who rallied the community and inspired a generation toward action and faith.

The church's legacy is not only etched in the lives it has changed but also in its architecture—through its red brick Gothic Revival sanctuary and the historic Colonial Revival Haven United Methodist Church, which together symbolize resilience and sacred tradition.

Despite enduring hardships, including a devastating fire, the congregation rebuilt the