

Makayla, and Alyssa for their leadership, compassion, and sacrifice. Their commitment to service reflects the strength of Yancey County and all of Western North Carolina. In honoring these remarkable individuals today, we also celebrate the enduring spirit of resilience that continues to sustain and strengthen our mountain communities.

HONORING ERNESTO NIETO,
FOUNDER OF THE NATIONAL
HISPANIC INSTITUTE, ON THE
OCCASION OF HIS 85TH BIRTH-
DAY

HON. JIMMY GOMEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2025

Mr. GOMEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a visionary leader whose life's work has left an indelible mark on the United States, Latin America, and the world, Mr. Ernesto Nieto, founder and president of the National Hispanic Institute (NHI). On the occasion of his 85th birthday, we commemorate not only the years of his extraordinary life, but also the enduring legacy he has forged for generations to come.

Son of civic activists and Methodist church leaders, Santos and Esther Nieto, Ernesto was born on October 6, 1940, in Houston, Texas. He and his brothers, Albert and Roy, grew up confronting racial discrimination firsthand, experiences that fueled his determination to join the civil rights movement and to create new pathways of opportunity for the Latino community. A proud graduate of Southwestern University, a talented basketball player ranking 23rd leading scorer in the nation, along with further graduate studies at the University of Houston, Mr. Nieto combined academic rigor with an unwavering commitment to being a cultivator of human potential, a steward of possibility, and a teacher of hope. His life reminds us that the truest measure of leadership is not in what we accumulate for ourselves, but in what we awaken in others.

In 1979, guided by that bold vision, Mr. Nieto founded the National Hispanic Institute to cultivate young Latino leaders. At a time when too many narratives focused only on deficits, Mr. Nieto charted a different course—one of possibility, strength, and aspiration. Under his leadership, NHI has engaged over 100,000 high-achieving students from across the United States and Latin America, partnering with more than 120 institutions of higher education.

Through NHI, he gave students the stage to discover their gifts, the structure to practice leadership, and the conviction to see themselves as architects of their communities' future. While NHI's roots are proudly grounded in the Latino community, its reach has expanded to a hemispheric scope. Today, NHI engages youth of every cultural background—from Nigerian American and Indian American families to young leaders across the Americas—all united by the common purpose of civic engagement, community life, and the pursuit of a stronger future.

For Mr. Nieto, leadership is not an abstract concept but a lived experience of community, family, and heritage. His philosophy is rooted in respect for the long history and traditions of

Latino leadership and in building systems that identify, nurture, and amplify the talents of young people. His groundbreaking book *Third Reality: Crafting a 21st Century Latino Agenda* captured this vision, underscoring the vital importance of cultivating leaders who embrace their cultural identity as an asset to American society and to the world.

Over the decades, Mr. Nieto's leadership has been recognized through countless honors. He has received the Distinguished Alumnus Award of Southwestern University, the Human Relations Award from the National Association of College Admissions Counselors, and the Splete Award for Civil Rights from the National Association of Independent Colleges & Universities. He has been named a Woodrow Wilson Visiting Scholar, honored with the First Tee Award, and awarded the degree of Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from both Texas Wesleyan University and Austin College. Yet the deepest proof of his legacy lies not in titles or accolades, but in the thousands of NHI alumni now serving as public servants, educators, business leaders, and advocates across the globe.

Together with his co-founder and wife, Gloria De León, the lessons from his parents and supported by his children, Nicole, Roy, Marc and Chris, his extended De León family, and his beloved NHI familia, Ernesto Nieto has built an institution that does not merely train leaders but transforms futures. His impact resonates in classrooms and boardrooms, in communities from the Rio Grande Valley to Puerto Rico, from Chicago to Mexico City, and across continents—reminding us that the strength of a nation, and indeed the world, rests on the gifts of its people.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Ernesto Nieto's 85th birthday, we recognize a man whose vision and persistence created not just an organization, but a movement. His life affirms that when communities invest in their youth, they invest in their future. For generations to come, the National Hispanic Institute will stand as a living testament to his belief that Latino communities are assets to be celebrated and empowered.

On behalf of my colleagues in Congress, I extend heartfelt congratulations to Ernesto Nieto. May his example continue to inspire leaders for generations, and may his life's work remind us all of the enduring power of vision, faith, and relentless commitment to awakening the leaders already within us, and among us.

WELCOMING HIS ALL-HOLINESS
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BAR-
THOLOMEW TO WASHINGTON,
D.C.

HON. JEFF HURD

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2025

Mr. HURD of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Washington, D.C.—the spiritual leader and Primus inter Pares (First among Equals) of more than 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide. For decades, he has been a tireless voice for religious freedom, and as the longest serving Archbishop of Constantinople in two millennia of Christian

history, he stands as a symbol of faith and resolve. His visit comes as he receives the distinguished Templeton Prize in New York, an honor once bestowed on Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Nelson Mandela—leaders whose lives have testified to the power of faith to transcend borders.

As a Catholic, I am deeply moved by the ties between our churches. His All-Holiness has met with Popes across generations, working to strengthen bonds of unity and to advance the cause of peace. Together, they have spoken with one voice: to defend the weak, serve those in need, and pursue reconciliation among nations. Patriarch Bartholomew is also a leading figure in interfaith dialogue among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. His presence here reminds us that faith has a vital role to play in protecting liberty and human dignity.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to welcome him to Washington and to thank him for his steadfast leadership in advancing religious freedom around the world.

RECOGNIZING SEPTEMBER AS
CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS
MONTH

HON. LORI TRAHAN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2025

Mrs. TRAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and to highlight two bipartisan bills, the Give Kids a Chance Act and the BRAIN Act, that will help save lives. Cancer is a disease which affects nearly every household and community around the country, and nowhere is it more heartbreaking than when it affects our children.

This month marks an opportunity to raise awareness for childhood cancer and support research for new treatment and therapy avenues. Just this year alone, nearly 10,000 children will be diagnosed with pediatric cancer. This is an issue that could not be more important and pressing.

The Give Kids a Chance Act removes many of the hurdles and barriers to researching treatments for rare pediatric diseases. It restores FDA incentives through the Rare Pediatric Disease Priority Review Voucher Program, encouraging companies to develop drugs for rare childhood diseases. The PRV program has already helped develop new treatments for 200,000 patients spanning nearly 50 rare diseases. Muscular dystrophy, sickle cell, and tropical diseases have all seen medical breakthroughs during this program.

Give Kids a Chance will also reauthorize the FDA to take action against drug sponsors that fail to comply with pediatric study requirements. Thus, ensuring that patients get the latest and best treatments that they require. As Dr. Benjamin Ebert, President of Dana-Faber, said, "sustained federal investment is needed to ensure that every child has the opportunity for a life free from disease." This bill would cement that investment and sustain our leadership in biotechnology, while costing the taxpayer nothing.

Similarly, the BRAIN Act is another common-sense, bipartisan piece of legislation that

will advance pediatric care. Recently, brain cancer has passed leukemia as the leading cause of cancer-related deaths of pediatric patients. While the number of cases is growing, survival rates have remained stagnant for 45 years. This needs to change.

The BRAIN Act will increase awareness for clinical trials, invest funding into glioblastoma therapeutics and cellular immunotherapy research, and authorize the FDA to ensure brain tumor patient access to clinical trials. Many aggressive pediatric cases have a survival rate of less than the average school year. We have the responsibility and opportunity to try and change that. Echoing what David Arons, of the National Brain Tumor Society, stated, “now is the time to build on government support for research and access to care for cancer patients.”

During this Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, I urge my colleagues to support these two bipartisan bills and give pediatric patients, across the country, a better chance to fight and survive.

RECOGNIZING HIS ALL-HOLINESS
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW

HON. AYANNA PRESSLEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2025

Ms. PRESSLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the United States of America as he accepts the prestigious and well-deserved Templeton Prize, one of the world’s most prestigious awards in Religion and Science.

On behalf of the thousands of Greek Orthodox constituents who call the Massachusetts 7th Congressional District home and the more than 300 million followers worldwide, it is an honor to host the longest serving Archbishop of Constantinople in the Church’s history and a humbling opportunity to say thank you for his efforts on behalf of the entire human family. Since being elevated to *primus inter pares* (first among equals) in 1991, he has worked tirelessly to promote religious freedom and human rights, foster cooperation and understanding among all people of faith, convene peace conferences around the globe, and call all of us to care for and preserve the environment we all share and will pass to our children and our children’s children. His personal attention and institutional leadership to address issues that transcend borders or religious affiliation have led him being hailed as “The Bridge Builder”, “The Patriarch of Peace”, and the “Green Patriarch.”

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew’s words and deeds have been in pursuit of justice, love, and reconciliation. And his lifetime of service and leadership has placed him among the illustrious company of previous Templeton Prize honorees—The Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, and the first ever recipient, Mother Teresa.

As His All-Holiness reminds us, “We have it in our power either to increase the hurt inflicted on our world or to contribute toward its healing. The choice is ours.” and each day he rises and chooses serve, to lead, to guide, to empower, and to divine God’s grace into heal-

ing. And it is my humbling honor to note for the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the unique gift of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew’s leadership and spiritual guidance and for his innumerable contributions to peace and harmony during his visit to the United States.

RECOGNIZING MR. TIMOTHY KENNEDY AND MRS. ELLEN KENNEDY

HON. TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2025

Mr. KENNEDY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Mr. Timothy Kennedy and Mrs. Ellen Kennedy, a couple whose influence can be seen and heard throughout Western New York by audience members of Buffalo Opera Unlimited.

Mr. Kennedy studied Voice at the Academy of Music, and later, in furtherance of his education, obtained a Master’s Degree in Music and Theater from SUNY Buffalo. Mr. Kennedy’s career has been a testament to his love of music, teaching students at each education level the art of music. Mr. Kennedy has also acted and served in the role of theater director at the African American Cultural Center, leading local church and community choirs. Mr. Kennedy is the Founder and Artistic Director of the Buffalo Unlimited Opera, conducting a majority of productions for nearly four decades.

Mrs. Kennedy studied at SUNY Buffalo, obtaining a Master’s Degree in Social Work, furthering her interest in child welfare advocacy and public policy. Mrs. Kennedy has served in the role of Associate Professor of Social Work and as chair of SUNY Buffalo State’s Social Work Department. She co-founded Citizen Action of Western New York and has been a longtime member of the Coalition of Economic Justice. For nearly four decades, Mr. Kennedy has acted as the Treasurer and Board Member of Buffalo Opera Unlimited.

Today, as we recognize the incredible service of Mr. Timothy Kennedy and Mrs. Ellen Kennedy, let us not only acknowledge their dedicated career as educational leaders and their steadfast commitment to the performance arts, but also their service to the Buffalo Opera Unlimited, providing a safe space for all to be seen and heard. Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy’s leadership is a masterclass in passion and artistry, and their service will be seen, felt, and heard for generations to come. We are all the better for it.

HONORING CRISTINA MERCADO ACEVEDO AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2025

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, Cristina Mercado Acevedo is an interdisciplinary-trained professional with a master’s in healthcare administration and over 20 years of community service involvement. She serves as the chief for

the Orlando VA Healthcare System’s Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) Office, where she is responsible for volunteer services, philanthropic engagement, and partnership solutions with community stakeholders. The service’s motto, “What’s Your Why?” resonates heavily with her, and she uses it as a framework in building the program.

Ms. Mercado Acevedo began her VA career at the Orlando VA in 2012 as a Pathways intern. In 2014, she became the program support assistant for the Public Affairs Office, handling internal and external communications. She managed the social media accounts and worked to increase awareness and develop connections with veterans and the community. Ms. Mercado Acevedo served on the outreach committee that planned the VA’s annual “Welcome Home” events. These family-friendly events provided access to emergent resources, employment opportunities, and information on both VA and community programs. During this time, she earned her Lean Six Sigma Green Belt and graduated from the VISN 8 Stepping with PRIDE Leadership Development Program.

Ms. Mercado Acevedo used these experiences to create one of the most robust CDCE programs in the Nation, not only offering veterans immediate assistance with emergent care items and transportation, but also sponsoring innovative projects aimed at improving veteran healthcare and experiences. Notable efforts include the partnership developed to combat food insecurity, which established the monthly Veterans Food Distribution event that serves around 300 veterans.

Ms. Mercado Acevedo continues to work to motivate the community to assist the VA in its mission to serve America’s heroes. Her “why” is not only to help those who may not otherwise receive the help they need, but also to inspire others to do the same.

HONORING JOHN J. MEYERS, III

HON. BRIAN J. MAST

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2025

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of John J. Meyers, III, a United States Navy veteran who passed away on September 14, 2025, at the age of 87 in Sarasota, Florida.

Born on September 3, 1938, in Brooklyn, New York, Mr. Meyers served his country with honor as a naval aviator. He completed his flight training in Pensacola, Florida, before joining VS-34 Squadron aboard the USS Essex. From 1962 to 1965, he served with distinction and became an instructor pilot at Naval Air Station Meridian in Meridian, Mississippi. His dedication to duty demonstrated the highest traditions of excellence of the United States Navy.

Following his military career, Mr. Meyers continued to make an impact in both aviation and financial services, and he retired as a respected financial advisor at Merrill Lynch in Sarasota. Beyond his accomplishments, he always remained an active and valued member of his community. Known for his humor, storytelling, and generosity of spirit, he uplifted countless individuals through mentorship, writing, and his presence on the Legacy Bike Trails of Sarasota.