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No. 144

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LOUDERMILK).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 3, 2025.

I hereby appoint the Honorable BARRY LOUDERMILK to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2025, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

HONORING THE LIFE OF WALT HARTNETT

(Ms. DEAN of Pennsylvania was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. DEAN of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, for nearly 2 years, I had the privilege of working alongside Walt Hartnett, a man who was a decorated soldier, a compassionate advocate for veterans, and a loving father and husband.

Walt worked in my district office as our veterans affairs representative, connecting his fellow vets to

healthcare, locating service records, and leading our veterans advisory panel. When vets came through our door, they knew Walt heard them.

Walt embodied service, and his time with our team was just one of those many roles. Walt was a 13-year Army veteran, serving 9 years Active Duty and 4 years in the Reserves. He earned the rank of sergeant and many military honors.

After his time in the military, Walt built a career in human resources, where he guided veterans into meaningful civilian careers.

As commander of our local Conshohocken VFW Post 1074 and commander of the Pennsylvania VFW District 16, Walt created a home for those who needed community the most.

When Walt joined our staff, I asked him why he would take a job so different, and perhaps of less pay, than the career he had planned. He said he was clear-eyed in his mission. He wanted to turn his passion for helping veterans into a career, and he did just that.

Walt was proud to work with and for the House of Representatives, an institution by and for the people. He was one of us, and he was a voice for a community that deserves our utmost respect and attention.

During our time together, Walt treated his role with the care and seriousness it demanded. He also handled it with joy and good humor. Walt's presence was all-encompassing. His laughter boomed through our offices, and his storytelling captivated every audience. He put his entire self into his work, and he was a friend to us, his co-workers.

Above all, he was a devoted husband and father. To know Walt was to know his family. He beamed with love and pride for his wife, Ashley, and his four children: Eric, Walt, Gianna, and Hailey.

It is with this beautiful family in mind and with their blessing that I share the next part of his story.

On June 9 of this year, Walt took his own life. It is a painful, sad, and difficult truth to share, and I share it because it is not the manner of Walt's death that is his true story. It is how he lived, with humor, compassion, and love of others. It is also, we know, a crisis in this country. Every day, many veterans die in this country from suicide.

Walt spent his entire life saving servicemen and -women, his brothers and sisters, from this very fate. Yet, we now eulogize him.

It is difficult for me to comprehend, for our team to comprehend, for his family.

In the days that followed Walt's death, the outpouring of grief and love, and disbelief, was beyond anything I have witnessed. His death reverberated in my district, through Conshohocken, Montgomery County, and, frankly, across the entire Commonwealth and Nation, because that is how many lives Walt touched. That is how people cared about him because he was a reflection of care.

His is an extraordinary loss for our Conshohocken community, for veterans, and for my office personally.

As we recognize September as Suicide Prevention Month, today, September 3, would have been Walt's 48th birthday.

As we mourn and grapple with his death, yet we celebrate his life, I share Walt's story as a way to please help others, to say you are not alone, and to say people love you and are available to help you; just reach out your hand, and we must reach out our hands, as well; and to say that veterans have endured so much, far beyond anything we can imagine. It is up to us to ensure that they get the aid they deserve.

We must do better by veterans. Walt sure did.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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God bless Walt Hartnett, and God bless the Hartnett family. May his memory forever be a blessing.

HONORING FLYNN WARREN, JR.

(Mr. CARTER of Georgia was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Flynn Warren, Jr.

Born in Mount Holly, North Carolina, Flynn graduated from high school a year early and was known in town as the local genius. He attended Belmont Abbey College, where he was named MVP of the golf team for 2 consecutive years.

Flynn later earned his pharmacy bachelor's degree from the University of South Carolina and his master's degree from the University of Georgia. Flynn went on to serve as a faculty member at the University of Georgia, retiring as a clinical professor and assistant dean for student affairs.

In 2003, Flynn was elected president of the Georgia Pharmacy Association and served on the boards of the Georgia Pharmacy Foundation and the International Association of Torch Clubs, mentoring countless students along the way.

Flynn was devoted to his family and community, volunteering with many organizations and helping anyone in need. He is survived by his loving wife, Monica, and their children.

HONORING TOM COUSINS

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and the legacy of Tom Cousins.

Tom Cousins was one of the most influential figures in Georgia's history, transforming Atlanta into one of the Nation's leading cities.

At just 16, he enrolled at the University of Georgia, earning a degree in finance and graduating in the top 10 percent of his class.

After graduation, he served in the United States Air Force, rising to the rank of first lieutenant.

Following his service, he founded a real estate company with his father, becoming the largest home builder in Georgia.

Tom later purchased key properties in downtown Atlanta and was instrumental in relocating the St. Louis Hawks to the city.

Beyond business, he led the East Lake revitalization project, turning the neighborhood into a thriving urban community. His vision and leadership left an enduring mark on Georgia and its capital.

Today, we remember Tom Cousins for his extraordinary contributions. Atlanta would not be Atlanta had it not been for Tom Cousins.

RECOGNIZING MASON HOWELL

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate one of Georgia's own, Mason Howell of Thomasville, who made history by capturing the 125th U.S. Amateur Championship.

Mason's path to victory was nothing short of extraordinary. He battled his way out of a 20-man playoff, defeated some of the world's highest-ranked amateurs, and ultimately claimed one of golf's most prestigious titles.

Only 18 years old, Mason displayed composure far beyond his years. He refused to be intimidated, showing that perseverance and confidence can overcome even the toughest competition.

Mason's triumph makes him the third youngest champion in U.S. Amateur history, a distinction that places him alongside the game's legends, and even ahead of Tiger Woods in the record books.

This remarkable accomplishment has earned Mason invitations to the Masters, the U.S. Open, and a spot on the 2025 U.S. Walker Cup team.

From his beginnings in Thomasville to the national stage, Mason Howell embodies the value of hard work, dedication, and belief in oneself.

□ 1010

RECOGNIZING MAJOR GENERAL BOBBY CHRISTINE

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Major General Bobby Christine, a proud alumnus of Samford University's Cumberland School of Law, on his appointment as the 43rd Judge Advocate General of the United States Army.

Major General Christine was confirmed by the Senate on June 29, 2025, and assumed his duties on July 1, 2025, becoming the Army's top legal officer and senior uniformed lawyer.

In this role, he provides legal counsel to the Secretary of the Army and the chief of staff, while leading the Judge Advocate General's Corps and delivering legal services across the Army.

His distinguished career includes both private practice and government service, where he has demonstrated integrity, professionalism, and an unwavering commitment to causes greater than himself.

Major General Christine's leadership will play a vital role in guiding the Army through transformation and readiness for the future. I congratulate him on this historic achievement and thank him for his service to our Nation.

HONORING THE LIFE OF GENE VUKELIC

(Mr. KENNEDY of New York was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. KENNEDY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of my dear friend, Gene Vukelic, a man whose vision and leadership have left an indelible mark on our community, our State, and our Nation.

Gene passed away at the age of 94 on August 3 of this year. Gene Vukelic was a successful businessman, a devoted husband and father, a veteran, and a man of deep faith and enormous generosity whose impact on western

New York will be felt for generations to come.

Gene was a patriot. After serving his country honorably as an instructor sergeant with the United States Marine Corps 3rd Division, Gene returned home to Buffalo and devoted himself to building both his family and his father's business, Try-It Distributing, into a regional powerhouse.

Over the span of six decades, Gene grew what started as a small family business during prohibition into our region's premier beverage distribution company, now in its fourth generation of family leadership.

Under his leadership, the company grew from a modest operation of 12 employees into a cornerstone of western New York's economy, employing over 600 individuals and operating statewide.

Through subsidiaries like Balkan Beverage and Saratoga Eagle Sales & Service, Try-It became one of the largest distributors in the Nation, while remaining true to its roots as a family business.

Gene's love for his family was the foundation of it all. Alongside his beloved wife of 67 years, Carole, they raised a large and loving family, instilling in their children the same commitment to community that defined Gene's life.

Gene's seven children—Mary Ellen, Paul, Suzanne, Timothy, Jeffrey, Peter, Matt, and his late son, Gregory—21 grandchildren, and 21 great-grandchildren are a testament to the values he embodied.

Beyond his family, Gene poured his energy into strengthening western New York through philanthropy and service. From the Muscular Dystrophy Association and Nardin Academy, from Canisius University to Mercy Hospital, and so many more, countless organizations and institutions flourished because of his support.

Those who knew Gene will say his generosity was never about recognition. It was a chance to give back and to make a difference and to lift others up.

Gene was a proud graduate of Canisius High School, class of 1948. He lived the values instilled in him through his Jesuit education. He mentored countless young people and never hesitated to lend a helping hand, quietly offering support to those in need and expecting nothing in return.

That is who Gene was. He was a provider, a protector, and a man with a heart too big to measure. Western New York has lost a giant and one of our greatest champions.

We remember Gene Vukelic for the business he built, for the community he nurtured, the causes he supported, the people he loved, and the legacy he leaves us. His life reminds us that true success lies in service to others.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the memory of Gene P. Vukelic and in extending our deepest condolences to the entire Vukelic family.