

supported residential high school is located in the heart of Alabama's Black Belt, where it will cultivate the next generation of healthcare professionals.

I believe that access to quality, affordable healthcare should be a right for all Americans and not just for the few. As we observe National Rural Health Day, let us recommit ourselves to ensuring that every American, regardless of their ZIP Code, gets the care that they need and that they deserve.

HONORING THE LIFE OF JUAN FERNANDEZ

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

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Juan Fernandez, a decorated marine, retired NYPD detective, and 9/11 first responder who passed away after a courageous battle with 9/11-induced pancreatic cancer.

As a marine, he proudly served our Nation with honor and discipline. Following his military service, Juan continued his commitment to protecting his community by serving as a detective in the New York Police Department where he was known for his courage and professionalism.

On September 11, 2001, Juan was among the many brave first responders who answered the call in one of our Nation's darkest hours. His courage and selflessness during and after that tragic day exemplified true strength and the resilience of the American spirit.

Juan's passing is a tremendous loss to his family, his friends, and those who served alongside him.

My thoughts are with his wife, Lily, and his daughters, Sydney, Samantha, and Jessica, during this difficult time. May his memory be a blessing to all who knew him and to our country.

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HONORING THE LIFE OF FRANCIS "FRANK" DUFFY

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Francis "Frank" Duffy, a devoted husband, father, and pillar of his community, who passed away on November 4 at the age of 102.

Frank was a decorated World War II veteran, earning both the Silver Star and the Purple Heart for his valor while serving on Iwo Jima. He concluded his military career at the rank of corporal.

Upon returning home from war, Frank embarked on a career with the United States Postal Service, retiring in 1978 as a foreman for transportation.

Frank was an active member of Pearl River VFW Post 7370, John H. Secor American Legion Post, Ancient Order of Hibernians, Irish Cultural Center, and St. Margaret's Church, and he was a past member of the Knights of Columbus.

A proud father of 5, loving grandfather of 10, and great-grandfather of

11, Frank exemplified the values of steadfast wisdom and enriched the lives of all he touched within the Pearl River community and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, may God bless the memory of Frank Duffy.

HONORING JUSTICE JOHN SWEENEY, JR.

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of the Honorable John Sweeney, Jr., a true steward of justice, integrity, and service in Putnam County and across New York State.

Justice Sweeney dedicated his life to the law and to the people it serves. From his early days as administrative assistant district attorney in Putnam County to his distinguished tenure on the New York State Supreme Court and Appellate Division, First Department, where he made history as the highest ranking judge ever to hail from Putnam County, John embodied fairness, humility, and an unwavering commitment to justice.

John was a man of quiet grace and deep intellect, a mentor to many, and a true gentleman in every sense of the word.

Beyond the courtroom, he gave selflessly to his community, from supporting veterans and first responders to volunteering at local fairs and serving with the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick.

On a personal level, he was extremely gracious and supportive of me, and I will never forget it.

Mr. Speaker, to his beloved wife, Alana, his children, and all who knew and loved him, our community shares in your loss and celebrates a life so well lived.

HONORING VINCENT ALTIERI

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Vincent Altieri, a dedicated community leader and longtime public servant.

Before joining Rockland County, Vince worked with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, advocating for environmental policy. He also served as a judge in the village of Spring Valley, where he will be remembered for his fairness, integrity, and respect for the rule of law.

Vince went on to dedicate more than 18 years of service to Rockland County, serving in the county executive's office as the intergovernmental relations director and later going on to serve as the executive director of the Rockland County Drainage Agency, showcasing his true commitment to improving the lives of his communities.

Vince's passing is a tremendous loss to Rockland County, and my thoughts are with his family and friends. His integrity, leadership, and passion for public service will be deeply missed.

HONORING DONNA BREEN CLARKE

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Donna Breen Clarke, who passed away peacefully on October 25, surrounded by her beloved family.

A proud graduate of Marymount Academy and Marymount College in Tarrytown, New York, Donna dedicated her life to the education and enrichment of the young minds of our community.

Donna started her career at Marymount International School in Surrey, England, before returning home to teach first graders in Mount Kisco following her marriage to her beloved husband, Joseph Clarke, in the summer of 1962.

Donna went on to serve as a preschool teacher and then director of the Nauraushaun Cooperative Nursery School in Pearl River, where she educated thousands of students, including me. Whether through educating the next generation or through her active involvement in St. Aedan's Church, Donna was deeply committed to her community.

A proud mother of three and loving grandmother of seven, Donna lived a life defined by compassion.

Mr. Speaker, may God bless the memory of Donna Breen Clarke and her husband, Joe, and may God continue to comfort her family.

HONORING JAMES M. BERNHARD, JR.

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

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, James M. Bernhard, Jr., was a legend in Louisiana. The headlines called him an icon, a titan, a giant of a man. Those who knew him understood why. He was a builder, a problem solver, and, at his core, a man of faith.

Jim was a proud LSU Tiger, graduating in construction management. He loved to tell the story of realizing at the last minute that he was 3 hours short of the credits he needed to graduate. Facing that problem, he decided to test out of a bowling class by scoring a 200, despite barely ever bowling before. In true Jim fashion, with determination and a high tolerance for risk, he figured out how to make it work and to graduate.

After LSU, he went to work for the family business, where every new employee had to start by installing toilets and air-conditioners. As the family's first college graduate and someone who had already done that work since high school, the rule didn't sit right with him. He turned down the offer to join and joined Southeast Fabricators as their first salesman.

On his first day, he picked up the Yellow Pages and got to work. He quickly discovered the company's prices were far too high to compete in south Louisiana. With no formal authority, he restructured the company's operations. By age 26, he was a corporate vice president and member of the board.

In 1986, he faced another challenge. Health insurance premiums were raised on workers, including two employees

whose wives were pregnant. Jim wanted to raise their pay to cover the cost. His boss said no, so Jim handed in his resignation, partnered with two colleagues, and founded National Fabricators with just \$50,000.

That company grew into The Shaw Group, a Fortune 500 global engineering powerhouse headquartered in Baton Rouge, at the time, the only non-utility Fortune 500 company in Louisiana. His success brought offers from other States to relocate. With millions of dollars on the table, he refused every one of them.

Jim was Louisiana through and through. His love for the State fueled his political engagement. After years of resisting pressure to get involved in politics, he finally told his board of directors that he was a proud Democrat, to their surprise, and devoted himself to pushing leaders to feed and educate children of all backgrounds, expand healthcare, and lift Louisiana forward.

Jim helped elect two Governors, the first Black mayor of Baton Rouge, and dozens of others across the State. He proudly served as the chairman of the Louisiana Democratic Party.

For years, many waited for Jim to run for Governor or the Senate. His son, one of my most trusted advisers, Tres—you know Tres—told me a secret. He said he was never going to run. He preferred challenging the rest of us to do better. His door was open to Democrats and Republicans alike who wanted to improve the lives of people.

When he retired from Shaw, he faced another problem: what to do next. He founded Bernhard Capital Partners, now one of the largest employers in my district. Remembering that family's business whose terms he once rejected, he joined his brother and transformed it into the largest energy-as-a-service provider in the United States.

Jim's impact stretches far beyond business. Louisianans will tell you Jim pumped the water out of New Orleans after Katrina. He helped build Category 5-strength levees that now protect the city. He built power plants that power America, paid living wages to tens of thousands of workers, expanded broadband for children in Baton Rouge during the pandemic and, with his beloved wife, Dana, founded the Every Kid a King Foundation to serve the children of Louisiana.

None of that compares to what he cherished most: his family. Dana was the great love of his life, his partner, protector, and companion until his last breath. His pride in his children, Tres, Kathryn, Patrick, Michael, and Benjamin, was immeasurable, even if he did joke about two of them going to Ole Miss. He taught them that determination, work ethic, and comfort were risks and that they should continue to live and do the right thing.

He adored his grandchildren, Ainsley, Jack, Remi, Sloane, Blake, Violet, IV, and Ella, and carried bottomless hopes for each of them.

Louisiana has lost one of its greatest champions. Jim Bernhard dedicated his

life to improving this State and the lives of people.

Now, when we face a problem, big or small, we honor him by doing what he always did. He solved it.

HONORING CHIEF HERBERT D. PROFFITT

(Mr. BARR of Kentucky was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a Kentucky hero, Chief Herbert D. Proffitt, and his son, Jeff Proffitt, who has worked tirelessly to ensure his father's sacrifice is never forgotten.

Chief Proffitt served our Nation in Korea and then protected the people of Tompkinsville, Kentucky, for 55 years in law enforcement. Years after he left the force, Chief Proffitt was murdered by a criminal he had arrested and put behind bars over a decade earlier. When his family sought Federal death benefits provided to families of fallen officers, they were denied because Proffitt was retired at the time of his death.

This exposed a painful loophole in the system and one that I am fighting to correct. I am leading the Chief Herbert D. Proffitt Act, legislation to amend the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program to ensure that the families of retired law enforcement officers who are killed as a result of their service are not unjustly denied benefits.

I thank Jeff Proffitt and the entire Proffitt family for their many years of service to Tompkinsville and Monroe County. I urge my colleagues to support this bill because it is our solemn duty to support the families of fallen law enforcement officers and make sure that the service and sacrifice of heroes like Chief Herbert D. Proffitt are never forgotten.

RECOGNIZING ROBERT N. CLAY

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a true pillar of Kentucky's signature thoroughbred horse racing industry.

Recently, Mr. Robert N. Clay was selected by The Thoroughbred Club of America as its 2025 Honor Guest, a well-deserved accolade that reflects a lifetime of excellence and leadership in our great Commonwealth's signature horse racing industry.

The founder of world-renowned Three Chimneys Farm in 1972, Clay built a legacy of breeding champions, supporting local jobs, and setting the standard for others to follow. Stallions to stand stud at Three Chimneys' during Clay's tenure included Slew of Gold, who was the operation's first stallion; Triple Crown winner Seattle Slew; and classic winners Silver Jones, Smarty Jones, Point Given, and Big Brown, as well as breed shapers Dynaformer and Rahy.

His contributions reach beyond the track. They reflect what Kentucky stands for: tradition, hard work, and community.

Today, we honor Mr. CLAY not only for his success in breeding and racing, but also for being a model Kentuckian.

A descendant of former Speaker of the House Henry Clay, the great compromiser, Robert Clay recently helped to establish the Henry Clay Center for Statesmanship, a nonprofit, non-partisan organization dedicated to transforming the tone of our country's national discourse and inspiring current and future leaders to emulate the political legacy of Henry Clay to find common ground through beneficial compromise.

On behalf of the people of Kentucky and this House, I thank Mr. Robert Clay for his life's work. I congratulate him on this honor, and I look forward to witnessing the enormous positive impact his efforts will continue to make on our Commonwealth.

CONDEMNING SOCIALISM

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the resolution condemning socialism and reaffirm my commitment to the principles of free market capitalism. These are principles that have guided the United States into becoming the most prosperous nation in the history of the world.

For more than two centuries, America's free enterprise system has lifted more people out of poverty, created more opportunity, and generated more innovation than any other economic model the world has ever known. American GDP has grown more than a hundredfold since 1920. Average life expectancy has risen dramatically. American workers today enjoy standards of living that socialist economies could never deliver.

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Contrast that with socialism. Whenever socialism has been tried—the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Maoist China, Cuba, and Venezuela—it has produced the same tragic pattern: economic collapse, shortages, lost freedoms, and human suffering. Venezuela, one of the most wealthy countries in Latin America, saw its economy contract by over 75 percent after adopting socialist policies, destroying its currency and plunging millions into poverty.

Mr. Speaker, free markets empower individuals. Socialism empowers the state. Socialism requires coercive power. To plan effectively, socialist central planners must override individual choices. This expands state power and threatens political freedom.

Capitalism, in contrast, is the only system capable of using dispersed knowledge, preserving individual freedom, and enabling spontaneous social cooperation without central direction. Under free enterprise, businesses compete, innovate, and create, driving American leadership in everything from technology to agriculture to energy.

Free markets and capitalism gave birth to the American Dream that is