

## EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

### RECOGNIZING COLORADO STATE REPRESENTATIVE SHANNON BIRD

#### **HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 8, 2026*

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Colorado State Representative Shannon Bird for her public service.

Throughout her time in the legislature, Representative Bird has worked tirelessly to fight for all individuals. She served on the Joint Budget Committee for 6 years, serving as vice chair and later chairwoman, ensuring that corporate loopholes were closed while still protecting small businesses. Representative Bird has been a champion for affordable housing, passing legislation to lower the cost of housing and offer more Coloradans the ability to own a home.

Though Representative Bird and I held different positions during my time in the State Legislature, we collaborated to cut through the red tape surrounding professional licensing and keep Colorado one of the best places to work. She is my colleague, my friend, a mother, and a steadfast advocate for her community.

Representative Bird has been serving the Westminster community for decades, starting as a city council member, serving as board chair of the Five Star Education Foundation, and as citizen chair for a school district's bond campaign. Representative Bird spent countless hours volunteering in students' classrooms, which led to her co-founding the Adams 12 Community Action Network, dedicated to empowering students by providing equal learning opportunities at local schools.

On behalf of the people of Colorado's 7th Congressional District, it is my honor to thank Representative Bird for her dedication to serving her community. I wish Shannon and her family all the best on their next endeavor.

### RECOGNIZING SOLANCO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FOR THEIR PERFORMANCE AT THE 2025 STUDENT DRONE CHALLENGE

#### **HON. LLOYD SMUCKER**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 8, 2026*

Mr. SMUCKER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize and congratulate Solanco High School students Robert Baxter, Lucas Vilk, and Caleb Reed on their success in the 2025 Student Drone Challenge.

The Student Drone Challenge is hosted by the Interaction of Ionizing Radiation with Matter University Research Alliance (IIRM-URA), which is a collaborative partnership between universities, laboratories, and industrial companies. Funded by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, the IIRM-URA's primary concern

is to mitigate threats against weapons of mass destruction. The competition is an opportunity for students to learn and engage in the fields that IIRM-URA supports.

The 2025 challenge involved a virtual drone simulation where students conducted reconnaissance to identify radiological threats in a building captured by friendly forces. Pitting over 800 competitors including those from university, high school, and middle school—the Solanco High School students took the top spots on the podium. Robert Baxter placed 1st overall, Lucas Vilk placed 2nd for high school students, and Caleb Reed placed 3rd for high school students.

I am grateful for educational programs that broaden our students' horizons. I congratulate the winning students, and I look forward to what their bright futures hold.

### TRIBUTE TO REVEREND WILLIAM JAMES "W.J." FRIERSON, SR.

#### **HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN**

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 8, 2026*

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of a devoted public servant, respected minister, and trusted community leader whose faithful service to Clarendon County and the people of South Carolina spanned more than three decades. Reverend William James "W.J." Frierson, Sr. transitioned on December 26, 2025, leaving behind a legacy defined by faith, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to service.

Born on July 8, 1953, in Manning, South Carolina, W.J. Frierson was raised in a family grounded in faith, hard work, and community responsibility. As a young man, he accepted Christ and became an active member of Green Hill Missionary Baptist Church, where he answered his call to the ministry and began a long journey of service within the church and beyond.

Over the years, he faithfully served in numerous roles, including choir member, sexton, trustee, ordained deacon, and ordained associate minister, building a foundation of spiritual leadership that would guide every aspect of his life. Most recently, W.J. Frierson pastored Lovely Hill Baptist Church in Holly Hill for 18 years, shepherding his congregation with compassion and wisdom.

Reverend Frierson was equally committed to education and self-improvement. A 1971 graduate of Manning High School, he pursued higher education at Texas College, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Education and Biology. He continued his Christian education through the Sumter Baptist M&E Association and Morris College, preparing himself to serve not only as a pastor, but as a thoughtful and compassionate leader equipped to guide others.

In 1995, W.J. Frierson began what would become a historic tenure on Clarendon County

Council and represented Council District Two for thirty years. During his service, he was known for his steady leadership, thoughtful deliberation, and deep concern for the well-being of all residents. He approached public office not as a position of power, but as an extension of his ministry—listening carefully, advocating tirelessly, and always seeking to do what was right rather than what was easy. His colleagues and constituents respected him for his integrity, humility, and willingness to work through differences for the good of the county.

Beyond elected office, Reverend Frierson was deeply engaged in civic and community organizations. He was affiliated with Prince Hall Masons as a member of Red Hill Lodge No. 144, the Manning Branch of the NAACP, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and numerous educational and faith-based boards and councils. Professionally, he dedicated more than three decades as Human Resources Manager at Century Aluminum, retiring in 2013.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and our colleagues join me in honoring the memory of Reverend William James "W.J." Frierson, Sr.—a servant of God, a servant of the people, and a pillar of his community. He was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, and a mentor to countless individuals who will carry his lessons forward. "W.J." was a man whose life reflected his faith, whose leadership strengthened his community, and whose legacy will endure.

### RECOGNIZING THE ATSMA FAMILY

#### **HON. DAVID G. VALADAO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 8, 2026*

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Atsma Family, who have been named the 2025 Dairy Family of the Year by the Tulare Chamber of Commerce.

The Atsma family's story is a remarkable example of hard work, perseverance, and dedication to agriculture. George Atsma's father initially immigrated from the Netherlands to Canada in 1953 at just 20 years old. After meeting his wife and welcoming their first child, they moved his young family to Southern California. There, he worked for local dairymen and eventually entered the dairy business himself—continuing the family tradition dating back to the 1600s.

In 1994, George Atsma began his own dairy legacy when he started building his own herd in Tipton, California. A few years later, he purchased property just east of Tulare, and by 2007 had completed renovations and moved his herd to the new site. Today, he operates both a successful dairy and a calf ranch with his wife, Tina, and their six children: Joshua, Danielle, Tavis, Annika, Georgiana, and Roman.

In 2005, Mr. Atsma launched a custom calf raising business—another example of the family's commitment to innovation in dairy production. What began with 450 milking cows has

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

grown to a herd of 1,550, including 1,400 milking cows. That kind of growth doesn't happen without a deep respect and knowledge of the land and livestock.

This June, during the Annual Salute to Dairy and Dairy Princess Coronation hosted by the Tulare Chamber of Commerce, the Atsma Family was recognized for their leadership, stewardship, and contributions to both the dairy industry and our local community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Atsma Family on this well-deserved honor. Their work represents the very best of the Central Valley's agricultural heritage, and their impact will be felt for generations to come.

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HONORING THE LIFE OF RALPH L. WADSWORTH

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**HON. BLAKE D. MOORE**

OF UTAH

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 8, 2026

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Ralph Wadsworth, who passed away on December 25, 2025.

In many ways, Ralph is a prime example of the American dream. Having grown up in Idaho, he became the first of his family to attend college. At the time, he lived in an abandoned Army barracks and took odd jobs to pay for lodging and food. When he married his high-school sweetheart, Peggy, they had just fifty dollars to their name.

Their poverty did not restrict Ralph's ambition and drive. After graduating from college and working for several engineering firms, he ventured out on his own and founded the Ralph L. Wadsworth Structural Engineering company in 1962. This company grew to be successful throughout the country. They engineered and built many high-rise office buildings in Salt Lake City, Utah, as well as many temples for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, including most notably the temple here in Washington, D.C.

Ralph prioritized his family, his faith, and his country. He held a deep love for the United States of America and raised his children to recognize the great blessing it is to live in this country. He always recognized the role that his faith and belief in God had in his personal and professional success. Perhaps most importantly, he, along with his wife Peggy, raised seven sons who continue his legacy of success and hard work.

Ralph is survived by his 7 sons, 21 grandchildren, and 27 great-grandchildren. I extend my deepest condolences to his family and express my gratitude for the important contributions that Ralph offered to our state and our Nation.

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HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF WILLIAM WOLPERT HARRIS

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**HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 8, 2026

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is with the heaviest but most grateful of hearts that I rise

today to pay tribute to the life and legacy of my dear friend, William Wolpert Harris. Bill was an extraordinary person who dedicated a lifetime to improving the quality of life of every child in every community. Today family, friends, and colleagues will gather to share stories and their memories of Bill, highlighting the incredible impact his good work had on countless lives.

Bill graduated with a bachelor's degree in liberal arts from Wesleyan University in 1961 and later earned a Doctor of Philosophy from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He worked for several years in the private sector and served as a visiting lecturer and adjunct professor at several universities. However, it was in 1981 that Bill founded what would become his lifelong passion and ultimate legacy, KidsPac, a group that helped to focus legislators at every level of government on the importance of early childhood education. It was through these efforts that I was introduced to and got to know Bill. Together we worked to shape and, eventually, enact legislation that authorized and funded the United States Child Traumatic Stress Initiative. This initiative has resulted in the creation of a national network of thirty-eight centers focusing on child traumatic stress. Bill was also one of the staunchest supporters of the effort to expand the child tax credit. Over the years, his guidance and advocacy ensured that this policy remained at the forefront of discussion and debate. We were indeed kindred spirits and for more than two decades, under Bill's outstanding direction, KidsPac was a leader and respected voice in the advocacy for policies concerning childcare, prenatal health, and early education.

For Bill, supporting children and enriching their early life experiences was not just a passion but a family occupation. Bill's father, Irving, founded the Erickson Institute as well as the Ounce of Prevention Fund, and was instrumental in the development of the Yale Child Study Center and Zero to Three. Bill's late wife, Robie, was a celebrated children's author, unapologetic defender of free speech, and remarkable advocate for children. Bill and Robie's activism was integrated into every facet of their lives so it is no surprise that both of their sons, David and Ben, both followed in their footsteps. David, taking a page from his Bill's work, has focused his professional life on research and advocacy for policies that address child poverty. Ben, whose interests more mirrored his mother's, is now Clinical Professor at the Psychological Center at The City College of New York (CCNY), which provides low-to-moderate-cost services to the CCNY and West Harlem communities. In this role, and throughout his career, he has worked with a socioeconomically and culturally diverse range of children and adolescents as well as adults.

Bill's dedication to issues concerning children and their health and well-being extended far beyond KidsPac. In 1984 Bill founded the Children's Research and Education Institute and he served on the advisory board of the Child Development Community Policing Program in conjunction with the Yale Child Study Center. He also served on numerous not-for-profit boards and advisory committees, including the Urban League, Wesleyan University, the State Legislative Leaders Foundation's Children's Program Steering Committee and

the National Science Foundation's Review Panel of the Public Understanding of Science Program. Over his lifetime he received a myriad of awards for his work on behalf of children, including the Advocacy Award, Division of Child, Youth and Family Services, from the American Psychological Association; the Dale Richmonde Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics; the Leadership Award for Public Service from Zero to Three; and the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Wesleyan University. And just a few short years ago, Bill was honored alongside his son, David, by the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies with its inaugural Public Advocacy Award for outstanding and fundamental contributions to advancing social understanding of trauma.

On a personal note, it has been an enormous privilege to work with three generations of the Harris family—first Irving, then Bill, and now David—to develop and advocate for policies and programs that give children and their families the foundational security they need to learn and thrive. Through their unique understanding that our young people represent the future and that we as a community and a Nation must give them the tools that they need in order to succeed.

Bill Harris was a remarkable man who dedicated a lifetime to improving the lives of children. I am honored to rise and pay tribute to the indelible mark he has left. Today, I thank my dear friend, Bill, for the difference that he has made in this country, and the millions of lives that have been made better through his vision, his passion, and his kindhearted spirit. He has been an inspiration to all of us. I will forever be grateful for the friendship, humor, and generosity he bestowed upon me over the years. I extend my heartfelt condolences to his sons, David and Ben. The world is just a bit dimmer without his presence, and he will be deeply missed by all those who knew him.

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RECOGNIZING AMY ZHANG

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**HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 8, 2026

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Amy Zhang of Morrison, Colorado, for winning Best in Show in the 2025 Congressional App Challenge.

Amy built EnAct: AI Guides, Vision-Impaired Act, an assistive technology app for seeing impaired individuals that describes the user's environment, helping them avoid pathway collisions. Her application uses multiple AI platforms, and was inspired in part by Amy's experience with a friend who is seeing impaired.

This accomplishment is an impressive example of Amy's determination, hard work, and advanced STEM knowledge base.

I congratulate Amy Zhang for her success in the Congressional App Challenge. I am certain she will continue to show the same dedication and strength of character in all her future endeavors. I am excited to see all she will accomplish.