

built a crude runway, cutting reliance on road transport.

These preparations were designed to confront a Chinese tactic that had, so far, been triumphant in the Korean War.

In 'human wave' attacks, Chinese units massed in front of U.N. positions and assaulted frontally. At the same time, other units infiltrated around the flanks, establishing roadblocks and ambush sites deep in the rear.

Like water, the Chinese forces aimed to roll over, around and behind U.N. units. The tactic had driven all before it.

In December 1950, U.N. forces had retreated from North Korea. A month later, Seoul fell. By February 1951, the war hung in the balance.

Chipyong-ri commanded a key road-rail transport junction. Freeman was ordered to hold firm.

Overlooking him, Chinese officers massed three regiments against the 23rd. What happened next passed into legend.

Chinese troops crawled through mines, under wire, up to fighting positions, initiating combat of the most traumatic kind: Extreme close range.

Massive 8-inch howitzers were depressed, shooting directly into the assault waves. U.S. aircraft dropped lines of flares for illumination, napalm incendiaries for effect.

French troops used a hand-cranked siren to overwhelm the bugles the Chinese used as signaling devices, then unleashed bayonet counterattacks.

The perimeter held the first night. On the second, Chinese penetrated the south. The battle raged all day as more Chinese troops were fed into the breach, swarming inside the perimeter. Just as darkness fell on Feb. 16, U.S. tanks appeared through a pass in the southern ridge: A relief force from 1st Cavalry Division. Caught on flat ground without cover, Chinese soldiers were mowed down by tank fire. They fled.

Freeman and his men had held.

Chipyong-ri was likened to Gettysburg, though smaller in scale than the Civil War epic.

Chinese after-action reports indicated shock. Per precedent, they had expected the Americans to retreat, and had been stunned by the armored intervention.

All units—French included—earned U.S. Army Distinguished Unit Citations.

#### PASSING GENERATION, NEW ANIMOSITY

Absent from the 2026 commemorations were the veterans. With the Korean War ending in 1953 living memories are evaporating—making commemorations doubly important.

'Telling stories, getting the soldiers to learn their history, builds cohesion,' Gen. Woodward said.

Though drones, long-range fires and satellite communications have changed combat, the core lessons of Chipyong-ri endure.

'The character of war has changed, the nature of war has not,' he continued. 'Whether it's with axes or drones, soldiers have got to have guts and determination, and leaders have got to inspire.'

Unlike World War II and the Vietnam War, the Korean War, dubbed 'The Forgotten War' hasn't resonated in popular culture. A bare handful of Korean actions caught Hollywood's attention, notably the Incheon amphibious landing, and the breakout from Chosin Reservoir. Chipyong-ri does not make the list.

Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Steve Tharp, who conducts Korean War tours and calls himself passionate about the battle, bemoaned that. The Marine Corps, which fought at Incheon and Chosin, outsmarts the Army in public relations, he sniffed.

Chipyong-ri, he said, is custom-built for film, with the dramatic armored interven-

tion being 'like the cavalry arriving in a Western.' In 2026, it was America's allies who felt overlooked.

French diplomats, officers and cadets attended the U.S. ceremony. In a subsequent commemoration, at the nearby French memorial, no U.S. troops or officials appeared.

'I am a little perplexed about what they were thinking,' said retired Col. Alain Nass, a former defense attache at Seoul's French Embassy. 'They were not here with us today. Why?'

He noted that 2ID was originally activated in France, during World War I. Every year, it is commemorated by French officialdom there.

'We have the U.S. flag here,' he said, pointing to the Stars and Stripes engraved alongside the Tricolor on the French battle memorial. 'It's important we keep this relationship alive: It's about comradeship.'

#### HONORING RYAN WILSON, LAPEER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

#### HON. LISA C. McCLAIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 20, 2026

Mrs. McCLAIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ryan Wilson, recipient of the Lapeer Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year Award, whose generosity and dedication to service have strengthened families, schools, and community organizations throughout Lapeer County.

Ryan has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to local students and families by helping pay down school lunch debt in the North Branch, Almont, and Imlay City School Districts. He actively supports school and community fundraisers by selling tickets, hosting bottle drives, and donating gift cards, food, and meat to organizations such as The Refuge and numerous school programs.

Ryan maintains a shelf stocked with free, nonperishable food items available to anyone in need—no questions asked. He sponsors youth and adult baseball teams, matches donations to Project Graduation up to \$1,000, prepares and donates meals for marching band students, and supports local farmers by offering space to sell their produce at no cost. In addition, he regularly volunteers at school events across Lapeer County.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Ryan Wilson for his outstanding service and unwavering commitment to the Lapeer community.

#### HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF COLONEL GIL CORONADO

#### HON. JOAQUIN CASTRO

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 20, 2026

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor the life and legacy of Retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Gil Coronado, who passed away on Saturday, February 7, 2026. Known as the "Padrino" of Hispanic Heritage Month, Colonel Coronado was a champion for our Nation's Hispanic communities. He is survived by his wife, Mary Helen, his four children

Elaine, Todd, Troy and Troup, three granddaughters and three great-grandchildren.

Born in Corpus Christi, Texas and raised in the Westside barrios of San Antonio, Colonel Coronado's early life was marked by adversity. However, Colonel Coronado was determined to overcome every obstacle he encountered. After dropping out of Lanier High School, Colonel Coronado decided to enlist in the United States Air Force at the age of 16. Colonel Coronado served our Nation with immeasurable bravery and honor as he rose through the ranks. He served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War and completed tours of duty in Germany, Spain and Panama. For his service, he was awarded a Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit and many other commendations.

In 1958, Colonel Coronado married his wife Mary Helen at Sacred Heart Church in San Antonio. Colonel Coronado and Mrs. Coronado shared a remarkable 67 years of marriage together.

In 1985, Colonel Coronado was assigned to the Inter-American Defense Board. It was here that he began to work closely with Members of Congress to advocate for the expansion of efforts to honor and celebrate the Hispanic contributions to American history. In 1988, his efforts proved successful, when Congress passed legislation that turned National Hispanic Week into Hispanic Heritage Month. Now, every year, because of his tireless advocacy, the United States recognizes and dedicates an entire month to celebrate the rich culture and incredible contributions of the Hispanic community.

In 1994, he was appointed by President Bill Clinton as the first Hispanic Director of the Selective Service System. He retired from the position in 2001 and returned to San Antonio where he continued to serve and lead the community.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in recognizing the incredible life and legacy of Colonel Gil Coronado. He served our Nation with the utmost dignity and respect and was a champion for our Hispanic Heritage. He will be greatly missed.

#### RECOGNIZING JOE SCHUMACHER'S 25 YEARS OF DEDICATED PUBLIC SERVICE

#### HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 20, 2026

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Joe Schumacher in honor of his 25 years of dedicated public service to Virginia's 1st Congressional District. Joe has had a profound impact on my work in Congress, and he is truly one of the finest leaders I know. Mr. Schumacher served as Chief of Staff and District Director for my predecessor, Congresswoman Jo Ann Davis. I am grateful that Joe brought his past public service expertise when he began serving as my District Director in 2007. Joe is a native Virginian, an Air Force veteran, and a graduate of the University of Virginia.

In his 25 years of service, Joe has proven to be an indispensable member of my team. His pride for the 1st District extends into everything he does. Not only is Joe passionate about his work, his commitment to bettering

the lives of Virginians and Americans alike is unparalleled. Joe is unwavering in his effort to go above and beyond to serve constituents and support his fellow staff. For example, his work as the Academy Coordinator has inspired countless young applicants as they begin their careers in service to this Nation. Joe's leadership is an outstanding example of what other District Directors should strive to be and truly embodies what it means to be a servant leader. I am deeply grateful to Joe for his years of service, his expertise, and his countless contributions.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me to recognize Joe Schumacher for his 25 years of selfless dedication to Virginia's 1st District. Joe is a crucial member of our team, and I am forever grateful for his service to our office and to Virginia's 1st District.

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HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY  
OF MAJOR GENERAL (RET.)  
FÉLIX A. SANTONI

**HON. PABLO JOSÉ HERNÁNDEZ**  
OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 20, 2026*

Mr. HERNÁNDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Major General (Ret.) Félix A. Santoni, whose passing marks the loss of a distinguished military leader and devoted public servant. His career and continued service reflect a deep and enduring commitment to the United States, to Puerto Rico, and to the men and women who serve in uniform.

A native of Arecibo, Puerto Rico, Major General Santoni entered military service in 1955 and served with distinction for decades across Active Duty, the National Guard, and the Army Reserve. Throughout his career, he held positions of significant responsibility, including Commander of U.S. Army Forces Puerto Rico and Chief for Mobilization and Reserve Affairs at U.S. Southern Command. In these roles, he worked to strengthen force

readiness and to advance the full integration of Puerto Rican Soldiers into the Total Force.

Major General Santoni was widely respected as a tireless advocate for Soldiers and their families. He consistently emphasized the importance of ensuring access to the resources, facilities, and support necessary for soldiers to successfully accomplish their mission.

Following his retirement from military service in 1995, Major General Santoni continued his lifelong commitment to public service as Senior Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army for Puerto Rico. In this capacity, he strengthened civil-military partnerships.

Major General Santoni's life reflects the long and proud tradition of Puerto Rican service members who have strengthened the Armed Forces and defended our Nation with distinction. I extend my deepest condolences to his family and loved ones and honor the memory of a soldier and public servant whose life exemplified duty, integrity, and service to country. Major General Santoni's legacy of leadership, integrity, and devotion to duty will endure for generations, reflecting the highest ideals of military and public service.

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HONORING THE 130TH ANNIVERSARY OF PHILLIPS 66 RODEO RENEWABLE ENERGY COMPLEX

**HON. JOHN GARAMENDI**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 20, 2026*

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commemorate the 130th anniversary of the Phillips 66 Rodeo Renewable Energy Complex, located in California's 8th Congressional District in Contra Costa County.

Founded in February 1896, the Rodeo facility celebrates 130 years of continuous operation in 2026, making it among the longest-operating refinery sites on the West Coast. For more than a century, the site has played an integral role in the economic and industrial life

of Contra Costa County and in California's broader energy landscape. Generations of workers and families have relied upon its operations, and its presence has supported local businesses, community institutions, and regional economic development.

Throughout its history, the Rodeo site has demonstrated an ability to adapt to meet the evolving energy needs of our state and Nation. From its early days as a petroleum refinery to its modern transformation, the facility has continually embraced technological advancement and operational innovation.

In 2024, the facility completed its Rodeo Renewed transformation, transitioning from a traditional petroleum refinery to a renewable energy complex capable of producing approximately 800 million gallons of renewable diesel annually. This significant shift supports lower-carbon transportation fuels and contributes to both national and state climate goals. The complex has also expanded into the production of sustainable aviation fuel, generating approximately 10,000 gallons per day of neat SAF blendstock into approximately 20,000 gallons per day of finished SAF, which helps address emissions in the aviation sector.

Further strengthening its clean energy portfolio, the facility completed an 88-acre on-site solar field in 2025, reducing its environmental footprint while diversifying its energy sources. These advancements reflect a sustained commitment to innovation, environmental stewardship, and the preservation of good-paying jobs in Contra Costa County and throughout California.

The Rodeo Renewable Energy Complex continues to operate under the core values of safety, honor, and commitment. These principles resonate deeply with the ideals of public service and community partnership.

On behalf of the constituents of California's 8th District, I commend Phillips 66 Rodeo Renewable Energy Complex AC Transit for their long-standing contributions to the energy sector, the workforce, and the surrounding community, and I congratulate them on 130 years of continuous operation.