

the Garden Club, and a Ruling Elder at First Presbyterian Church. She served on boards supporting youth programs, drug prevention initiatives, hospice care, and senior living communities. In 1984, she was recognized as Winter Haven's Woman of the Year.

Even after stepping down from elected office, Ellie continued to serve on the city's Board of Adjustment and Police Pension Board. For her, public service was not a position—it was a way of life.

Born in Hawaii, educated at Vanderbilt University, and rooted in Winter Haven since 1972, Ellie led by example with a cheerful spirit and unwavering dedication to her family and her community.

She is survived by her loving husband, Jim, her daughters Kit and Peggy, her grandson Kasey, and many cherished friends and family members. She leaves behind a legacy of leadership, generosity, and civic pride that will continue to inspire generations in Winter Haven.

Mr. Speaker, communities are shaped by individuals who choose to give more than they take. Ellie Threlkel was one of those rare individuals. On behalf of Florida's 18th Congressional District, I extend my deepest condolences to the Threlkel family and my gratitude for Ellie's extraordinary life of service. May she rest in peace.

HONORING TAYLA TOLLEFSON

HON. MICHAEL BAUMGARTNER

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Mr. BAUMGARTNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate Tayla Tollefson, the Outreach Coordinator in my district office, who was crowned Miss Spokane on Sunday, February 15, 2026.

Tayla is a senior at Eastern Washington University, one of the great institutions serving students across our region and expanding opportunity throughout Eastern Washington, where she is pursuing a double major in Political Science, Pre-Law, and International Affairs, along with a minor in Psychology. After graduation, she will attend Gonzaga University School of Law, continuing the tradition of excellence and community commitment that has made Gonzaga a point of pride for so many families in Eastern Washington. Her academic dedication and leadership exemplify the hard work, talent, and community spirit that define the very best of Washington's 5th District.

The Miss Spokane Scholarship Organization is a proud local preliminary to the Miss America Organization, providing scholarships to young women while promoting academic achievement, leadership, and community engagement. Tayla's own words capture the heart of that mission. She said, "As Miss Spokane, I am deeply honored to represent a community that believes in opportunity, growth, and the power of young women to lead and inspire change."

Tayla has a clear vision for building new community partnerships, expanding opportunities, and empowering other young women to pursue their goals with confidence and purpose.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Tayla—our new Miss Spokane—and an outstanding representative of Eastern Washington.

RECOGNIZING CHRIS AND DEANA HILL OF ODYSSEY BEERWERKS

HON. BRITTANY PETERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Ms. PETERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Chris and Deana Hill of Odyssey Beerwerks for receiving the Arvada Chamber of Commerce's 2025 Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

Odyssey Beerwerks is a values-driven brewery that blends hospitality with innovation. Chris and Deana have dedicated their lives to refining beers, hosting events, and providing excellent service, all based directly on customer feedback. Chris and Deana are deeply rooted in Arvada as both residents and business owners. Chris has made a lasting impact on the local business community through his service on the Arvada Chamber of Commerce Board, where he founded the Chamber's Business Mastery Group. He has also held leadership roles with the Arvada Visitors Center Board, the Entrepreneurship KAPS Council, and the Beverage Industry Roundtable, and regularly lends his expertise on panels alongside city and county leaders.

Every year, the Entrepreneur of the Year Award recognizes the commitment, investment, and innovation of business owners in the Arvada community, and Chris and Deana's community involvement and dedication to elevating both their craft and their peers make them truly deserving of this recognition.

On behalf of the people of Colorado's 7th Congressional District, it is my honor to congratulate Chris and Deana Hill for this award and thank them for their commitment to the Arvada community.

RECOGNIZING THE POWER OF HBCUS THAT BUILT TWO LEADERS BORN A GENERATION APART

HON. TROY A. CARTER

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, history has a way of sending us quiet reminders that the past is never truly past.

One of mine arrives every year on October 26. On October 26, 1919, a child was born in Washington, D.C. who would later help reshape American politics. His name was Edward William Brooke, III.

Forty-four years later, on that same date, October 26, 1963, I was born. Different generations. Different parts of the country. Yet our stories meet at a powerful intersection: the strength of a historically Black college and university education and the determination to lead with purpose in a Nation that has not always welcomed that leadership.

Senator Brooke's journey ran through the proud halls of Howard University. At a time when opportunity was restricted and expectations were narrow, historically Black colleges and universities stood as open doors. They did more than educate. They affirmed dignity, built confidence, and prepared students to step forward even when the world doubted them.

Howard helped prepare Brooke for a life of service. After serving his country in World War II and earning a law degree from Boston University School of Law, he entered public life with discipline and conviction. In 1966, the voters of Massachusetts elected him to the United States Senate, making him the first Black American to be popularly elected to that chamber.

That moment mattered far beyond one state. It showed that the American story could grow larger, even if slowly and unevenly. It reminded young people across the country that preparation and courage can move history forward.

Twenty-five years later, that same spirit of progress touched my own life. Like Senator Brooke, my path was shaped by an HBCU education. I graduated from Xavier University of Louisiana, an institution grounded in faith, scholarship, discipline, and service. Xavier instilled something deeper than academic knowledge. It reinforced character and responsibility. It taught that leadership is measured not by title, but by the difference one makes.

That foundation led me into public service. In 1991, exactly twenty-five years after Senator Brooke's historic election, the people of Louisiana elected me to serve in the Louisiana House of Representatives. I became the first African American to represent my district in that body.

The journey continued, one step at a time. I later had the honor of becoming the first African American elected to represent District C on the New Orleans City Council. Later still, I became the first Black state senator to represent that same community in the Louisiana State Senate.

Today, I have the privilege of serving in the United States Congress representing Louisiana's 2nd Congressional District, and as First Vice Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. I carry those responsibilities mindful of the leaders who opened doors long before my time.

None of those milestones were about personal recognition. They were about progress. They were about making sure the doors of opportunity opened wider for those coming behind us.

Senator Brooke understood that responsibility well. During his time in the Senate, he helped shape the Civil Rights Act of 1968, strengthening protections against housing discrimination. During the Watergate crisis, he also demonstrated uncommon independence and courage by becoming the first Republican senator to call for President Richard Nixon's resignation.

That is what principled leadership looks like. Progress in America has never happened automatically. It has moved forward because people prepared themselves, believed in something larger than themselves, and kept moving even when the path was uncertain.

From the classrooms of Howard to the campus of Xavier. From neighborhoods often overlooked to the halls of government. From local service to national responsibility.

Historically Black colleges and universities have helped prepare generations of leaders for moments they could not yet see.

When I reflect on the fact that Senator Brooke and I share a birthday, and that my own historic election came twenty-five years after his, I am reminded that progress often unfolds across generations. One person

breaks a barrier. Another carries that progress forward. The next builds something stronger still.

From the Westbank of New Orleans and the Cut Off to the United States Congress, my journey has been shaped by faith, family, community, and education. At the center of that story stands the enduring strength of historically Black colleges and universities.

Somewhere today, a student is walking across the campus of an HBCU carrying dreams they may not yet fully understand. Just as Edward Brooke once did. Just as so many of us have. When history calls their name, they will be ready.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY
OF SERGIO RAMOS

HON. BRIAN BABIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of my dear friend, Sergio Ramos, who went to be with our Lord on Saturday, December 27, 2025. Sergio was born on March 26, 1943, to Job and Ofelia Ramos in Tampico, Mexico. He loved this Nation deeply and took great pride in becoming a United States citizen on April 30, 1970.

It is never easy to say goodbye, especially to someone who was a friend to everyone and such a pillar of the community. Throughout his life, Sergio positively impacted countless individuals through his faith, service, and generosity. He was also among the very first to welcome me to Tyler County and the first to invite me to his beloved First Baptist Church, a reflection of the warmth and kindness he extended to everyone he met. A man devoted to God and to others, Sergio led music in groups large and small in other local churches and on numerous mission trips. It was not uncommon for him to pick up his guitar and fill a room with song. He taught Spanish, coached tennis for decades, and dedicated himself to mentoring generations of students and athletes.

In recognition of his outstanding and lasting contributions, he was inducted into the Texas Tennis Coaches Hall of Fame, received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Woodville Letterman's Club, and was named Citizen of the Year of Tyler County.

Sergio Ramos leaves behind a legacy of faith, service, and compassion that will long endure. I will deeply miss singing alongside him in our church choir and in our men's group, The Generations. Yet, all who knew him take much comfort in knowing that Sergio now sings in a greater, glorious and eternal choir.

RECOGNIZING STACY GASKILL

HON. BRITTANY PETERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Ms. PETERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Stacy Gaskill of Golden, Colorado for representing the United States in Women's Snowboarding at the 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Milan, Italy.

Stacy is a lifelong athlete, having been involved in winter sports since the age of two. In 2014, she first came to national prominence after placing 1st in the Rocky Mountain Series for Breakers and 12th nationwide in snowboarding. She would continue to place highly on various national and worldwide snowboarding tournaments before competing in the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, where she made it to the semifinals. She has shown remarkable resilience, pressing forward in her athletic career despite facing multiple injuries along the way.

Stacy is an admirable athlete who has shown a lifelong dedication to her sport. The Colorado community is so proud to have Stacy representing us at the 2026 Olympic Games.

On behalf of the people of Colorado's 7th Congressional District, it is my honor to congratulate Stacy Gaskill for representing Colorado and the United States during the 2026 Winter Olympic Games.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. EMILIA STRONG SYKES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Mrs. SYKES. Mr. Speaker, had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 77, and NAY on Roll Call No. 78.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY
OF CARLOS SPECTOR

HON. VERONICA ESCOBAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the extraordinary and enduring legacy of Carlos Spector, an El Paso native, Air Force veteran, immigration attorney, and human rights advocate, whose work changed the lives of countless families and redefined the meaning of justice along our border.

Carlos was born in El Paso; he is the son of a Jewish father whose family fled the pogroms of Russia and a mother from Mexico. Since birth, he lived the reality of a border community, moving between cultures, languages, and histories that shaped his understanding of justice and belonging. He carried his identity proudly and understood his responsibility to steward the cultural heritages of his community.

That responsibility—to defend the vulnerable and stand with those facing injustice—was instilled in him early. Stories from his father about the horrors of World War II and the moral obligation to defend others left an indelible impression on him. Those lessons would ultimately guide his life's work.

After serving in the United States Air Force, Carlos returned to El Paso determined to find a way to use the law in service of others. He eventually attended Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law, where he began to shape the philosophy that would define his career: that the law, at its highest calling, is not an instrument of power but a shield for the vulnerable.

Carlos began practicing immigration law at a time when the legal system offered little hope for many seeking refuge. In 1991, Carlos won one of the first successful asylum cases for a Mexican political leader, marking a pivotal moment in U.S. immigration law and opening the door for others who faced persecution in their country of origin. But Carlos did not stop there. When the violence of the Mexican drug war intensified in the late 2000s, thousands of people fled north seeking safety. At the time, very few asylum claims from Mexican nationals succeeded in U.S. courts. Many attorneys refused to take such cases at all. Carlos did the opposite.

Among those he represented were journalists threatened for exposing corruption, community activists targeted by criminal organizations, and families whose only crime was standing up for their communities. One of his clients, a community leader who had lost multiple family members to violence, later said that he and his remaining relatives were alive because of Carlos Spector's determination to defend them.

Through these efforts, Carlos helped transform public understanding of the challenges unfolding along our border. He showed that the people seeking refuge were not statistics or political taking points—they were human beings whose lives, families, and futures were all at stake.

Those who knew him recall that even during his battle with cancer, his first thoughts were not about himself but about the people he represented. After receiving his diagnosis, he immediately began contacting colleagues to ensure that the cases he had been working on would continue and that his clients would not be abandoned. That devotion to others defined him.

Across the borderland and throughout this Nation, there are families who wake each morning in safety because one attorney refused to accept that their lives were beyond the protection of the law. Because of that belief, Carlos Spector did more than practice law. He expanded the boundaries of justice. He transformed the possibilities of asylum law. And he reminded us that we all have the power to protect our communities and shape a more just world.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life and legacy of Carlos Spector, a tireless advocate, a defender of human rights, and a proud son of El Paso whose impact will endure far beyond his lifetime.

RECOGNIZING KYLE NEGOMIR

HON. BRITTANY PETERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Ms. PETERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kyle Negomir of Littleton, Colorado, for representing the United States in Men's Alpine Skiing at the 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Milan, Italy.

Kyle is an accomplished and versatile athlete, excelling in football, lacrosse, and water-skiing, as well as skiing. After high school, he was recruited to Dartmouth College and offered a spot on their skiing team. After a serious injury in 2022, he overcame a challenging