

in Virginia and West Virginia in 1979 and 1980. For his service, he was awarded the National Defense Service Medal and the Expert Marksmanship Badge.

Sam's service did not end when he took off the uniform. Sam has stayed actively involved in the veteran community, dedicating a significant amount of time to volunteer for various organizations such as Angels for Veterans and AMVETS of Monroe County. These organizations strengthen the bonds of fellowship, provide practical assistance, and remind our veterans that their sacrifices are both remembered and honored.

In service to his community, Sam also co-founded Flags O'er Veterans with Ken Moore after identifying that several local cemeteries lacked American flags honoring deceased veterans. The organization pays tribute to veterans in Monroe by raising funds to install flagpoles, American flags, lighting, and memorial plaques in cemeteries where they are laid to rest. What began with a simple but powerful conviction that every veteran's resting place should be marked by the flag they defended has grown into a lasting local tribute.

Sam Struth's remarkable life of service and his leadership working on behalf of America's veterans inspire us all. May others know of my high regard for Sam, as well as my deep gratitude for his lasting contributions to the country we love.

HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE
OF H. PYLORI SCREENING

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to highlight an important opportunity to prevent stomach cancer, ulcers, and other stomach diseases—and save lives—through increased awareness and screening for *Helicobacter pylori*, commonly known as H. pylori.

I am a strong supporter of stomach cancer research and have proudly authored a letter to the Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Defense, along with my colleague Representative JOSH GOTTHEIMER, to continue to include stomach cancer in the DoD's Peer-Reviewed Cancer Research Program. I encourage my colleagues to join us in this effort and sign our letter.

I also strongly support implementing prevention strategies already proven by research. H. pylori is a bacterial infection of the stomach that affects millions of Americans and is recognized as the leading cause of stomach cancer, a disease that is often diagnosed at a late stage and remains one of our Nation's deadliest cancers. The bacterium is classified as a Group 1 carcinogen, meaning it is definitively linked to cancer in humans. Fortunately, it is also one of the few stomach cancer risk factors that can be detected with a simple non-invasive test and treated with antibiotics.

There have already been significant studies on this issue. Large clinical trials and long-term studies have demonstrated that eradicating H. pylori infection can reduce the risk of developing stomach cancer by roughly 45 to 50 percent among infected individuals. In other words, identifying and treating this infec-

tion represents one of the most promising opportunities we have today to prevent a deadly cancer before it begins.

This issue is particularly important for our military and veteran communities. Service members may face increased exposure to H. pylori during overseas deployments to regions where the infection is more common, as well as through living conditions that can facilitate transmission, such as close quarters in barracks or ship berths. Studies suggest that approximately 25 percent of the U.S. veteran population has had or currently has an H. pylori infection.

The American College of Gastroenterology, which provides widely used clinical guidelines on this issue, strongly recommends that all patients diagnosed with H. pylori infection receive eradication therapy and be re-tested afterward to confirm that the infection has been successfully eliminated. In addition, household contacts of infected individuals may also benefit from testing.

However, recent research examining veterans receiving care through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has identified significant gaps in care. A large study of veterans found that approximately 25 percent of patients who tested positive for H. pylori were not prescribed eradication therapy, despite clinical guidelines recommending treatment for all infected individuals. In addition, only about 21 percent of patients received recommended follow-up testing to confirm that the infection had been successfully eliminated, leaving many veterans unknowingly at continued risk.

These findings highlight a clear opportunity to strengthen prevention efforts and improve care for those who have served our Nation. Improving early detection and treatment of a H. pylori infection has the potential not only to prevent stomach cancer, but also to reduce long-term healthcare costs and improve force readiness by addressing a preventable disease before it becomes life-threatening.

For these reasons, I support efforts calling on the United States Department of Defense to conduct a cost and feasibility study evaluating H. pylori screening among members of the Armed Forces and veterans, including those receiving care through the Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Such a study will help determine how we can implement a targeted screening program for at-risk servicemembers and veterans and ensure that they receive the preventive care they deserve.

I have submitted a request to the House Armed Services Committee to include this directive as report language in the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act, and I hope the committee will give this request strong consideration.

I would also like to thank my constituent, Mike Fields, a volunteer with Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer, for bringing this issue to my attention and for sharing his personal story with me and my staff.

This issue matters to families in South Carolina and across the country. By increasing awareness of H. pylori infection, expanding access to testing, and studying the feasibility of screening programs for military and veteran populations, we can take meaningful steps toward preventing stomach cancer and saving lives.

Prevention remains one of the most powerful tools we have in the fight against cancer.

Acting on the research we already have regarding H. pylori infection offers a practical and evidence-based opportunity to protect the health of Americans—including those who have bravely served our Nation.

RECOGNIZING J.J. PEARCE HIGH
SCHOOL

HON. BETH VAN DUYNE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the students and faculty of J.J. Pearce High School in Richardson, Texas for their participation in our 2026 Valentines for Veterans program.

Through this initiative, students and Junior ROTC members created more than 170 Valentine's Day cards for veterans in our North Texas community, sharing encouragement, appreciation, and heartfelt support with those who have served. Their commitment to honoring our heroes helped make this project a tremendous success, contributing to over 1,800 Valentine's Day cards received by our office.

This outpouring of kindness reflects the deep gratitude for our veterans that remains strong throughout North Texas.

The creativity and compassion demonstrated by these students are a testament to the caring spirit present throughout their school. I commend them for their generosity and community involvement and thank them for helping make this year's Valentines for Veterans program so meaningful. It is an honor to represent them in Texas' 24th District.

HONORING THE LIFE OF LATE OREGON
STATE SENATOR AVEL
GORDLY

HON. JANELLE S. BYNUM

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Ms. BYNUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of a mentor and true friend, Oregon State Senator Avel Gordly. Senator Gordly, the first Black woman to serve in the chamber, brought a presence that was regal and distinctive. Sadly, her tenure as an elected Black Oregonian was so rare that when she came to visit me on the House floor, many in the chamber thought she was a relative rather than the esteemed public servant who had dedicated and delivered so much to Oregon. I will miss her phone calls, her inspirational texts, and most of all, her high expectations of me. I include in the RECORD the following obituary as an esteemed account of Senator Gordly's impressive life:

February 13, 1947–February 16, 2026

Avel Louise Gordly was born February 13, 1947, and was a daughter of Fay Lee Gordly and Beatrice Bernice Coleman Gordly, a sister to Fayette (Faye) Burch and Tyrone Lee Gordly. She was the mother of one son, Tyrone Waters, whose loving care enabled Avel to live comfortably and peacefully at home during the last years of her life. She is also

survived by her niece, Michelle Burch, and her great-nieces, Yasmin Woodard and Mikaela Woodard. Avel grew up in Northeast Portland, where the seeds of her activism were sown early by her mother and father, her grandmothers Alberta Randolph and Lessie Gordly, and by the women in her community.

Avel was committed to building, serving, and celebrating the Beloved Community, a central tenet of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's leadership. A few weeks ago, Avel said she wanted to be remembered as a Brown Girl from Northeast Portland who believed in justice, hard work, and taking care of each other. At every stage of her remarkable life of service, Avel communicated what she believed through well-chosen words and through how she showed up for others. In the Oregon Legislature, with her students at Portland State University, in her faith community, in her many mentoring relationships and friendships, Avel conveyed what a former legislative colleague described as "a moral clarity" and what one mentee described as "a warm embrace."

After graduating from her neighborhood elementary school, Avel attended Girls Polytechnic High School. As one of the few Black students, this was her first experience of being in an environment that did not welcome her presence, actively encourage her learning, or value her intellect. She felt the contrast between the warmth and affirmation of her early years in Portland's Black community and her experience in a mostly white environment. It was during these years that Avel became aware of racism and developed ways to succeed despite ever-present barriers to achievement. Although she felt like an "alien, in unwelcome territory" at Girls Polytechnic High School, with her mother's help, Avel resisted being steered into vocational education classes and instead enrolled in academic and business courses. Her advocacy and preparation led to her first job after high school at Pacific Northwest Bell. Even though it was a good job with benefits, Avel was eager to work for the betterment of her community. She enrolled at Portland State University, where she was active in Black Cultural Affairs and the Black Liberation movement while earning a degree in the Administration of Justice. While at Portland State, she participated in Operation Crossroads Africa, student exchange program that brought her to Nigeria, Benin, Togo, the Ivory Coast, and Ghana. This trip to Africa was transformational, broadening her horizons as she experienced life outside of the United States in countries where she was no longer a minority. This was the beginning of her love of African history and culture. Her reverence for Black history and culture was reflected in the art and books she collected and shared throughout her life.

Returning to Oregon, Avel continued her advocacy. As a member of the Oregon Chapter of the Black United Front (BUF), she coordinated the BUF's Saturday School. Working with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Avel helped secure key anti-apartheid victories in Oregon and during the 1980s and ran programs for the Urban League and the House of Umoja to provide opportunities for youth in North and Northeast Portland.

Avel's entry into political life came at the urging of those in her community and felt like an extension of work to which she was already committed. As someone who did not seek the limelight, she learned the power of well-prepared, respectful, and clear communication to change minds, hearts, and, importantly, laws. Initially appointed as a State representative in 1991, Avel was subsequently elected to serve three terms in the

Oregon Legislature. As an elected official, she focused on building relationships with her colleagues on both sides of the aisle and statewide. As she gained confidence and realized the power of her voice, she modeled both courage and vulnerability in her leadership. These qualities made her a trustworthy and valued colleague in the Legislature and in the Black Community.

In 1996, Avel was elected to the Oregon State Senate and became the first Black Woman to serve in that chamber. She was known as the "conscience of the Senate" because of her integrity and the mutual respect she shared with her colleagues. During her twelve years in the Senate, she made an indelible mark on Oregon. She sponsored the 2001 Senate Joint Resolution 31, which officially recognized Juneteenth in Oregon. She was the chief petitioner in 2002 for Oregon Ballot Measure 14, a constitutional amendment that removed racially discriminatory language from the Oregon Constitution, and for Measure 25, which raised Oregon's minimum wage. She brought a statewide focus on the health concerns of Oregon's Black, Indigenous, Latino, and Asian communities by forming the Racial and Ethnic Health Task Force and the Environmental Justice Committee. Her personal experiences and legislative acumen spurred her push for State Hospital Reform and to establish the Avel Gordly Center for Healing at Oregon Health and Science University to help address the gaps in access to mental health services in the Black community.

After retiring from the legislature, Avel began teaching as an associate professor in the Black Studies Department at Portland State. Pouring into students' lives and curating learning opportunities that connected them to Portland's Black community and to national and international movements inspired her. In 2011, she co-authored, with Patricia A Schechter, her memoir, *Remembering the Power of Words*, where she courageously opened up about her experiences of depression. She received an honorary Doctor of Letters from Portland State University in 2017. Avel participated in the African American Alliance and sat on the board of the Portland African American Leadership Forum. She generously offered her thoughts on political strategy and endorsed candidates. She was committed to mentoring emerging Black leaders and encouraging them to shine. Her commitment to supporting generations of new leaders has been institutionalized in the Avel Gordly Scholarship for Black Women. She valued her lifelong friends and the close, loving relationships she nurtured with women of the next two generations, who lovingly called her "Mama Avel." The love she gave and received from her community filled her heart with joy. She was a loving aunt, great-aunt, and an honorary grandmother. She was gratified to spend her final years with her son Tyrone, enjoying morning coffees, healing conversations, and prayer times together.

Avel's life and legacy teach us that in alignment with one's divine purpose, ordinary people can make an extraordinary difference in changing institutions, healing lives, and making the world a better place.

HONORING JASMINE BARNES, CPA

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ms. Jasmine

Barnes, CPA, a financial strategist, senior audit leader, and civic servant whose work exemplifies integrity, accountability, and service to the public good. With more than a decade of experience across public accounting, financial institutions, and state government, Ms. Barnes has earned distinction for translating complex financial data into actionable insight that strengthens governance and protects taxpayer resources.

Ms. Barnes currently serves as Deputy Director of Internal Audit at the Mississippi Department of Transportation, where she oversees federally funded transportation programs, indirect cost compliance, overhead rate reviews, and multimodal project closeouts. Her leadership ensures cost allowability under federal regulations, reinforces audit integrity, and safeguards public funding across complex state and federal initiatives. She has completed hundreds of compliance reviews and routinely analyzes legislative measures impacting transportation finance and audit oversight.

In addition to her public service, Ms. Barnes is the Founder and Principal of J Barnes CPA, PLLC, where she advises individuals, businesses, and nonprofit organizations on tax resolution, compliance strategy, and financial systems improvement. Through negotiated settlements and proactive planning, she has secured more than \$110,000 in cumulative client savings while helping organizations build sustainable, compliant financial operations.

Previously, Ms. Barnes held senior audit roles at Trustmark Bank and HORNE LLP, where she led internal, external, and compliance audits, conducted risk assessments, and strengthened regulatory preparedness across financial institutions while mentoring emerging professionals.

In 2025, Ms. Barnes entered the political arena, securing the Democratic nomination for Jackson City Council, Ward 1, on a five-pillar platform centered on fiscal responsibility, infrastructure, public safety, economic development, and recreation. Her campaign marked a historic milestone for Ward 1 and highlighted her commitment to principled, solutions-oriented leadership.

Ms. Barnes is a 2024 Mississippi Business Journal Top 40 Under 40 honoree and a recipient of the 2025 American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Dave G. Campbell Quality Award. She is a graduate of the University of Mississippi and is currently pursuing her Executive MBA at Millsaps College.

Beyond her professional achievements, Ms. Barnes remains deeply committed to mentorship, financial literacy, and educational engagement. She is a proud parent to her two sons, Kingston and Atlas, and believes that policy, professionalism, and purpose must work together to build stronger communities.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize Ms. Jasmine Barnes, CPA, for her exceptional service, leadership, and dedication to the people of Mississippi. Her work reflects the high standard of public stewardship our communities deserve.