

next century continue to uplift and unite our community through the power of music.

CELEBRATING THE B'NAI ISRAEL
CONGREGATION'S CENTENNIAL

RECOGNIZING MR. JOE BESNARD

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary contributions of a dedicated community leader in my district, Mr. Joe Besnard. Since 2011, Joe has been a steadfast champion for survivors of domestic and sexual violence served by Sunrise. A retired veteran and successful businessman, he embodies a lifelong commitment to service, leadership, and community responsibility. His generosity extends far beyond financial support, as he donates his time, heart, and personal influence to create lasting change.

Over the years, Joe has strengthened Sunrise's mission in meaningful and tangible ways. He has supported the agency's Holiday Giving Program, ensuring survivors and their children experience joy and dignity during the holiday season. He funded the remodeling of the shelter kitchen, transforming it into a welcoming and functional space, and contributed significantly to the construction of an on-site office building, creating a dedicated and safe workspace for hotline advocates and counselors who provide life-saving support to survivors every day. Joe's impact extends beyond direct donations. He founded one of Sunrise's signature fundraising events, the Pull for Survivors Sporting Clays event, which continues to generate critical resources and community awareness. He personally recruits participants, sponsors, and supporters, leveraging his relationships to grow the event each year. In a reflection of his humility and heart, he asks friends and family to purchase birthday and Christmas gifts for him that can be used as auction items to benefit survivors.

Importantly, Joe's compassion includes the staff who carry out this difficult work. Each Christmas, he provides Honey Baked hams for staff and shelter residents, a thoughtful tradition that reminds both survivors and employees that they are seen, valued, and cared for.

Through consistent action, generosity, and leadership, Joe Besnard has helped create safer spaces, stronger services, and brighter futures for countless survivors and families. He exemplifies the spirit of "Heroes Among Us" as someone who quietly and faithfully uses his resources to strengthen his community, bring hope where it is needed most, and advocate for survivors and their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Joe Besnard for his outstanding contributions to our community. For his tireless dedication and extraordinary generosity, I am proud to honor Mr. Besnard as a 2026 Heroes Among Us recipient for Florida's 12th Congressional District.

HON. JAMIE RASKIN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the B'nai Israel Congregation's Centennial. B'nai Israel is an essential part of Maryland's 8th District's vibrant and diverse Jewish community, and it is a privilege to represent a congregation with one hundred years of storied history and activism.

The B'nai Israel Congregation began as a small gathering of committed friends who met at a congregant's home on Georgia Avenue in Northwest D.C. It grew so quickly that the congregation had to occupy two buildings in the District before finally finding its permanent home in Rockville in 1976. In 2026, the B'nai Israel Congregation is one of the largest synagogues in the movement of Conservative Judaism. Today, over 1,100 families attend temple services, participate in b'nai mitzvahs and celebrate life milestones together.

The people who call the B'nai Israel Congregation their spiritual community share core values of connection and service that have defined the Congregation throughout these one hundred years. The Congregation supports lifelong Jewish learning opportunities, from the Schilit Early Childhood Center to a busy adult education program. The synagogue maintains a close relationship with several communities in Israel. And every month, congregants enact their commitment to community by delivering nutritious meals to local women experiencing homelessness. The entire congregation gathers for Mitzvah Day in December to bring mitzvot to people across Montgomery County.

This tradition of service flows from the B'nai Israel Congregation's deep well of moral solidarity and civic engagement. During their own migration from D.C. to Rockville, members of B'nai Israel helped lead the urgent project to free Jewish people trapped and persecuted by the Soviet Union. Today, congregants and clergy at the B'nai Israel Congregation are active participants in Montgomery County's interfaith coalition. They invest deeply in educating each generation about our own struggles in America for social justice and lead educational trips to historic sites of the Civil Rights Movement.

Montgomery County and the wider DMV have been fortunate to be the home of the B'nai Israel Congregation over the past one hundred years. Liberal democracies are sustained by vibrant and engaged communities like the B'nai Israel Congregation. May the congregants and clergy of B'nai Israel continue to go from strength to strength for the next century to come—yasher koach.

HONORING THE PEACE CORPS ON
ITS 65TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. GWEN MOORE

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary impact the Peace Corps has made on inter-

national communities and American citizens alike. This month, on its 65th anniversary, we honor the Peace Corps and the dedicated volunteers who have served their country and helped better communities around the globe.

On October 14, 1960, then-Senator John F. Kennedy announced in a speech at the University of Michigan an innovative new idea—the establishment of an American organization that would send volunteers abroad to foster mutual understanding, build relationships, and develop educational, economic, and agricultural opportunities in underserved communities. Soon, the Peace Corps was born, and the first group of volunteers left for Ghana on August 28, 1961.

Throughout its history, the Peace Corps has continued to send dedicated and talented Americans across the globe to assist in health, education and economic development as well as partake in other progressive projects to help those in need throughout the world. Peace Corps volunteers represent the best of the United States and the undimmed potential of "soft power" initiatives that help make our world a better place. Through emersion in and supportive engagement with host communities, Peace Corps volunteers help to show the world an uplifting side of the United States that values peace, prosperity and progress not just in this country, but throughout the world. I have long been a supporter of this program, including supporting increased funding for it—and I hope, we can provide an increase in FY 2027—as well as cosponsored legislation introduced by my good friend, Congresswoman BETTY MCCOLLUM, to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Peace Corps volunteers to recognize the dedication and devotion and spirit of public service that has guided their hard work and sacrifice.

Although President Kennedy first established the Peace Corps by Executive Order and is rightly associated with it, there had been earlier proposals for an international service organization. And I want to point out the role that former Wisconsin Congressman Henry S. Reuss played. In fact, before Kennedy's Michigan speech, Representative Reuss created a proposal for what he referred to as a "Point Four Youth Corps," an idea that later evolved into the Peace Corps, and he spearheaded the House legislation to authorize this program.

Since its inception, Peace Corps volunteers have gone above and beyond in fulfilling their mission through community-based development. More than 240,000 volunteers, 6,577 of them Wisconsinites, have devoted themselves to service in six different sectors, including agriculture, economic development, education, environment, health, and youth development.

In the Peace Corps Act, Congress declared it the policy of the United States to "promote world peace and friendship through a Peace Corps . . . available to interested countries and areas men and women of the United States qualified for service abroad and willing to serve, under conditions of hardship if necessary" to help "promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served and a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people". Sixty-five years later, the Peace Corps is as relevant as ever and probably even more needed.

By living alongside the community they serve, volunteers develop lifelong friendships

and cultural skills that reflect positively on the program, the community, and the United States. Returned volunteers have come back changed and gone on to do great things in their communities here at home, including serving as Members of Congress.

This program has strengthened food security, improved health outcomes, and empowered the next generation in over 140 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific Islands, and I am honored to join in celebrating its 65th anniversary.

RECOGNIZING MR. ROBERT “BOB”
MORGAN

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding contributions of a dedicated community leader in my district, Mr. Robert “Bob” Morgan. A seasoned financial services executive, Bob has over 40 years of experience in mortgage banking and consumer credit risk management. A nine-year resident of Brooksville, Florida, Bob has brought his expertise in leadership, risk management, and strategic analysis to active community service. Since 2024, he has served as a Hernando County Citizen Advocate and, in June 2025, was appointed to the Hernando County DOGE Committee, where he reviews county operations, expenditures, and policies to promote efficiency and reduce government waste. Bob also serves on the Habitat for Humanity Gulfside—Hernando County Leadership Advisory Council, appointed in June 2025, supporting the organization’s mission by engaging with the community and helping evaluate prospective homeowners.

Through his advocacy and guidance, Bob has helped provide affordable homeownership for eight Hernando County families in 2025 and 2026. Bob is also actively involved in his local church community, volunteering with various church projects and serving as a member of the Knights of Columbus. He previously served on the Hernando County Planning & Zoning Commission, reviewing land use, zoning, and comprehensive plan matters. A graduate of Benedictine College with a B.A. in Business and a minor in Economics, Bob continues to lend his expertise to both industry and community organizations. Bob Morgan’s commitment to public service and his efforts to strengthen our community reflect a dedication to improving the lives of those around him. His leadership, generosity, and engagement make him a true asset to Hernando County.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Robert Morgan for his exemplary contributions to our community. For his tireless work and dedication to improving the lives of others, I am proud to honor Mr. Morgan as a 2026 Heroes Among Us recipient for Florida’s 12th Congressional District.

RECOGNIZING CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT SELECT RICHELLE MONIQUE CALVO ESPERANZA

HON. JAMES C. MOYLAN

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Mr. MOYLAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great pride to recognize a distinguished service member, a proven leader, and a proud daughter of Guam—Richelle Monique Calvo Esperanza—on the occasion of her promotion to Chief Master Sergeant in the United States Air Force. This selection represents one of the highest achievements within the enlisted force. It is a distinction earned by a select few—those who have demonstrated not only technical expertise, but sustained leadership, integrity, and the trust of those they serve alongside.

Chief Master Sergeant Esperanza currently serves as the Senior Enlisted Leader for the 71st Force Support Squadron at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma. In this role, she leads a team of over 140 personnel—military, civilian, and contractors—supporting more than 7,000 Airmen and their families while managing millions of dollars in resources critical to mission readiness.

Her responsibilities span everything from personnel and family support to education, readiness, and casualty services—work that directly impacts the strength and resilience of our force.

But beyond the scope of her responsibilities is the journey that brought her here. Chief Master Sergeant Select Esperanza hails from Santa Rita, Guam. After graduating from Guam High School in 2007, she made the decision to serve—enlisting in the United States Air Force in April 2008.

Over the past 18 years of service and counting, she has built a career marked by steady progression, increasing responsibility, and operational excellence. She has served at the squadron, group, and wing levels. She has deployed in support of Operations New Dawn, Inherent Resolve, and Spartan Shield, contributing directly to U.S. military operations abroad. She has also distinguished herself academically—earning both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in management while completing the Air Force’s most rigorous professional military education programs. Her record reflects not just competence, but excellence—recognized through numerous awards, including Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year honors and a distinguished graduate distinction throughout her career. But what makes this moment especially meaningful is what she represents.

For Guam, a small island with a deep tradition of military service, leaders like Chief Master Sergeant Select Esperanza are a source of immense pride. She represents the values we hold close: service, humility, resilience, and a commitment to something greater than oneself. She represents the generations of families in Guam who have answered the call to serve. And she represents what is possible when talent, discipline, and opportunity come together. She is also grounded in family. She is married to Second Lieutenant Emery Esperanza, himself a prior enlisted Airman who recently earned his commission. Together, they are raising two children, Emelia

and Emery, continuing a legacy of service and leadership. She is the daughter of Ricardo and Carmelita Calvo of Santa Rita, whose pride today is shared by the entire island of Guam.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when our Nation depends on strong, capable leadership within our Armed Forces, the promotion of leaders like Chief Master Sergeant Select Esperanza sends a clear message—that excellence is honored, and that leadership matters. Her journey, from Guam to the highest enlisted rank in the Air Force, is not just a personal achievement. It is a reflection of the strength of our communities and the enduring contributions of Guam to the defense of our Nation.

I congratulate Chief Master Sergeant Select Richelle Monique Calvo Esperanza on this extraordinary milestone. We thank her for her service, we honor her leadership, and we do so with immense pride as she continues to represent Guam and our Nation with distinction in the years ahead.

HONORING VETERAN JAMES
SMITH, JR.

HON. LANCE GOODEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Mr. GOODEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the historic life and accomplishments of Veteran James Smith, Jr. of Terrell, Texas. Mr. Smith, Jr.’s life has been dedicated to service. Serving eight years in the Navy, he had various deployments and held the rank of E-5 at the time of his discharge.

He began his fearless journey in Boot Camp in San Diego, which was followed by an assignment in Whidbey, Washington. Mr. Smith, Jr. then served on a crash crew on the USS Boxer out of San Francisco, where he frequently wore asbestos suits as protection from frequent bombing raids. In the great state of Texas, he served two years at Naval Air Station Kingsville and another term with an air squadron in Virginia. Mr. Smith, Jr. was stationed in Patuxent River, Maryland, in his final two years of service and graduated from the Combat Airman School.

For his dedicated service to our Nation, he received several honors, including the National Defense Service Medal, China Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal, Korean Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and Three-Star Attachments. It is my honor to recognize Mr. Smith, Jr.’s long life of service to our country and community, and I wish him the best in the coming years.

RECOGNIZING MRS. PATTIE
STEPBACH

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary contributions of a dedicated community leader in my district, Mrs. Pattie Stepbach. Mrs. Stepbach has been a beacon of compassion, generosity, and unwavering commitment to the well-being of students in our community.