

the Sonoma Ecology Center (SEC) in 1990, later becoming its Executive Director in 1992.

Through his tenure as Executive Director, the SEC has developed into a locally driven, regionally respected agency working through extensive partnerships to conduct technical research, education, and restoration to enhance ecological health at the watershed scale. He has worked for years with partners to preserve thousands of acres of ecologically significant open space and to establish the regionally significant Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor. In 2012, he led a unique partnership of local nonprofits to reopen and manage Sugarloaf Ridge State Park in Kenwood, California. He helped found the North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative and the Sonoma Environmental Education Collaborative (SEEC). After the 2017 fires, he helped establish Sonoma Valley Collaborative, a partnership of economic, social service, and environmental interests to build a cross-sector framework for resolving complex, interrelated issues. He has served as Vice President on the Sonoma Valley Chamber of Commerce, cofounded the Sonoma Valley Executive Directors Round Table, and currently serves on the steering committee for Sonoma Valley Collaborative.

Mr. Dale is a staple of Sonoma Valley's ecological community, helping associations across the county thrive under his leadership. In 2017, he was the recipient of Sonoma County's Jefferson Award for Public Service and the Sonoma County Economic Development Board's Spirit of Sonoma Award. In 1997, he received the John Muir Conservation Award. Mr. Dale is also a frequent contributor to the Sonoma Index Tribune and other publications.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Richard Dale has helped transform Sonoma County and preserve the natural beauty that it is known for. Through his leadership and vision, our community has become a better place to live. For these reasons and more, it is fitting and proper that we recognize him today as Sonoma County's 2026 Climate Crisis Champion of the Year.

CELEBRATING THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF RABBI BARUCH J. COHON

HON. JUAN CISCOMANI

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate the 100th birthday of Rabbi Baruch J. Cohon.

Rabbi Cohon has led a remarkable life. Over the years, he has been a world-class Cantor, served in the U.S. Navy as a sonarman during World War II, worked as a TV producer and composer, and served as an ordained Rabbi, among many other pursuits. He truly has an exceptional legacy.

In his time in television, he worked as a producer and writer for well-known shows like *Sea Hunt* and *Cisco Kid* and taught Gene Wilder how to pray in the traditional Jewish style for the film, *The Frisco Kid*.

Rabbi Cohon has also been a concert artist, choir conductor and arranger, recording artist, published author and editor, a university and seminary professor, philanthropist, and held leadership roles both locally and nationally.

His published article on the structure of Jewish music remains the standard for understanding it on an academic level.

Rabbi Cohon moved to Southern Arizona in 2019, having previously served as a visiting rabbi and teacher at several Southern Arizona congregations throughout many visits over the years.

He is a highly respected figure in the Jewish community here who is still very much active, regularly assisting in leading services and reading the Torah nearly every Shabbat and festival.

Additionally, Rabbi Cohon established the Cohon Memorial Foundation in memory of his own parents, which provides a large annual gift to those whose work benefits the Jewish community as a whole.

Dearly devoted to his family, Rabbi Cohon spends as much time as he can with his four children, seven grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

I thank Rabbi Baruch J. Cohon for his decades of service in so many different capacities. I wish him a very happy 100th birthday.

COMMEMORATING ARMED FORCES DAY AND THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY

HON. NICHOLAS A. LANGWORTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Mr. LANGWORTHY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the service of our brave men and women for Armed Forces Day, May 16, 2026. Armed Forces Day is a 76-year tradition to thank all of those who are currently serving, as well as those who have served and sacrificed to defend our freedom. As we celebrate the 250th birthday of the United States of America, it is my privilege to recognize the contributions our active military members continue to make to our great Nation. Freedom was never free, and the men and women who stand up with valor and courage must always be held in the highest regard.

As we speak, the Western New York Armed Forces Committee is preparing to recognize fourteen service members at its 63rd Military Ball, and it is my honor to include in the RECORD their names as a tribute to their service, and the service of their brothers and sisters in arms:

SSG Owen Silver—United States Army
SFC Ashley Blake—United States Army Reserve
SPC Trevor Lock—New York Army National Guard
Sgt. Jonathan D. Rieth—New York Guard
SSgt. Kelsey Trevino—United States Marine Corps
Cpl. Keane Kistner—United States Marine Corps Reserve
MA1 Jordan Costello—United States Navy
MA1 Amanda Paine—United States Navy Reserve
Cpl. Wilyin Gao—New York Naval Militia
SSgt. Danny Garrett—United States Air Force
SSgt. Cameron Swick—United States Air Force Reserve
TSgt. Gary Buchanan—New York Air National Guard
MST1 Martin Mueller—United States Coast Guard

MST2 Krishnan Muthaiah—United States Coast Guard Reserve

Western New York and the Southern Tier are home to many proud service members and veterans, and our community has a long and proud tradition of military service. It is my honor to recognize their bravery. On behalf of the United States Congress and the constituents of New York's 23rd Congressional District, I thank these men and women for their service and all those who continue to serve with them.

HONORING YUSEF MGENI

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Ms. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the life of an extraordinary man and revered community leader, Mr. Yusef Mgeni. Yusef passed away on April 7, 2026, at age 77, following a lengthy illness. He is survived by his wife, Iva Jean Mgeni; his son, Victor Mgeni; and his daughter, Aisha Mgeni.

Born Charles Anderson to parents Charles Crane Anderson, a shoe cobbler, and Theresa Agnes Baker Anderson, Yusef is a son of Saint Paul's Rondo neighborhood, a predominantly African American community, most of which was demolished to make way for Interstate 94 in the late 1950s. The grandnephew of former slave and civil rights leader Frederick McGhee, Minnesota's first Black attorney and founder of the state's first Black Catholic church, Yusef was keenly aware of and extremely proud of his lineage.

In the early 1970s, Yusef changed his name from Charles Anderson to Yusef Mgeni in an African naming ceremony and later in a court of law. Yusef, a Yoruba name meaning "God increases" or "a person seeking wisdom to benefit others," and Mgeni, a Swahili word meaning "guest," "visitor," or "foreigner," were aptly chosen, foreshadowing the path that would define his life's work.

Yusef graduated from Metropolitan State University in 1974 with a degree in journalism. He began producing programming for the University of Minnesota's radio station, KUOM, and later helped expand Minneapolis-based KMOJ, which began broadcasting in 1976 to serve Black residents of public housing in North Minneapolis. Over time, the station broadened its reach while continuing to provide community-centered programming led by Black residents.

A brilliant historian, educator, community organizer, and activist, Yusef joined the Saint Paul NAACP in 1988, where he eventually became Vice President and Branch Parliamentarian. Yusef played a key role in landmark negotiations with the Saint Paul Police Department, resulting in a mediated agreement addressing racial profiling. Years later, Yusef successfully negotiated for body-worn cameras to be worn by officers, which became an amendment to this agreement.

As a scholar and educator, Yusef was Director of the Office of Educational Equity for the Saint Paul Public Schools from 2006 to 2012. He was a champion for ethnic studies in Minnesota schools, believing that ethnic studies are American history and not a supplement to it—a way for everyone to see themselves reflected in what they are learning.

Yusef's lifelong contributions to the Black community in Minnesota covered a wide swath, including his work with the African American Leadership Council, Saint Paul's Hallie Q. Brown Center, the Urban Coalition, the Saint Paul Urban League, the Sabathani Community Center, the Million Man March, and Saint Paul Strong. He was interviewed for the Rondo Neighborhood Oral History Project, preserved by the Minnesota Historical Society, in which he reflected on his life's work.

Yusef was very special to me and to the constituents of Minnesota's 4th Congressional District. As a leader in Saint Paul's Black community and the Rondo neighborhood, Yusef reached out to me personally over the years, not only in his capacity as a local leader, but also as my neighbor. We were able to have many deep, valuable, and meaningful conversations about the history of the Rondo neighborhood and Saint Paul's Black community. I learned so much from those conversations, which repeatedly proved helpful to me in my work as a member of Congress. I fondly remember some of those conversations taking place on bitterly cold January mornings as we marched together in celebration of the life of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

It was my great honor and privilege to call Yusef a friend. He has been an inspiration to me, and his legacy will continue to inspire many for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating the remarkable life and powerful work of Mr. Yusef Mgeni.

CONGRATULATING THE HOUCHIN COMMUNITY BLOOD BANK ON ITS 75TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. DAVID G. VALADAO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Houchin Community Blood Bank on its 75th anniversary and recognize its decades of service providing a safe and reliable blood supply to families in Kern County and across the Central Valley.

Founded in April 1951 through the generosity of C. Elmer Houchin and the Houchin Foundation, the blood bank was established in memory of his mother, who needed transfusions during her fight with cancer. As the first blood bank in Kern County, Houchin made lifesaving care more accessible and ensured residents no longer had to travel long distances for critical treatment.

For over 70 years, the Houchin Community Blood Bank has undergone several significant improvements to meet the needs of our community. Over the past several decades, Houchin has expanded its reach with multiple new medical facilities for blood collection and processing. In addition, they have upgraded their technologies to ensure the highest quality testing and collection. Today, the bank serves all of Bakersfield and Kern County through multiple collection and processing sites. Thanks to these efforts, and the generosity of countless donors, Houchin has helped save more than 3 million lives.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating the Houchin Community Blood Bank on this remarkable milestone. As Kern County's only truly local blood provider, their commitment to service has greatly contributed to ending the blood supply shortage, saved countless lives, and improved access to care.

HONORING CHRISTINA BENZ

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Christina Benz, whom I have named the California 4th District's 2026 Climate Crisis Champion of the Year for Napa County, in recognition of her leadership in strengthening our community's commitment to a sustainable future.

Born in Concord, Massachusetts, Mrs. Benz graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1979 with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry. After growing interested in viticulture, she went on to pursue a Master of Science in Food Science at the University of California, Davis. She then moved to Napa and began to work with our wine community. During that period, she worked at Murphy-Goode and Laird Family Estates as a Winemaker and then as a Winery Production Manager for 37 Vintages. She has since retired and grown more active in Napa County's political and environmental groups.

Mrs. Benz has helped to strengthen and build organizations that are dedicated to making our county more sustainable and cleaner. Over the last four years she has helped to organize and plan the "Annual Napa Climate Summit," an event that has become a staple of Napa County and regularly attracts audiences of 200 or more. Additionally, the event puts a much-needed spotlight on the existential threat of climate change and how residents of the Napa Valley can help mitigate its harmful effects. She is also a frequent contributor to the Napa Register's Climate Connections column, where she informs concerned citizens across the Napa Valley of local progress and ways to participate in taking climate action. Most prominently, she drafted and advocated for a "Climate Change and Sustainability" element in the 2040 City of Napa General Plan that was adopted in 2022. This element is especially important as it embeds sustainability as a core principle of the City of Napa's General Plan and commits that the city will have net-zero climate pollutants by 2030. She was also able to secure funding for the Napa River Ecology Center in American Canyon from the Sierra Club. The Ecology Center will create a community gathering space for future generations. It is dedicated to educating the public about the importance of the Napa River's wetlands and working to defend them.

Mrs. Benz is a staple of our Napa Valley community and participates in numerous organizations dedicated to the health of North Bay and Napa County. She has served on the Executive Committee of the Napa Group of the Sierra Club, the Citizens Advisory Committee for the Napa Valley Transportation Authority,

and the Board of the Napa Valley Vine Trail. She has helped guide our Napa County community as the Treasurer of Napa Green, a member of the Executive Committee of the Democrats of Napa Valley, and as a board member of Feeding It Forward.

Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Christina Benz has dedicated herself to protecting our environment and educating others about its importance. Her selfless commitment towards our community and the people who live within it is unmatched. For these reasons and more, it is fitting and proper that we recognize her today as Napa County's 2026 Climate Crisis Champion of the Year.

CELEBRATING THE FLANDRAU SCIENCE CENTER & PLANETARIUM'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JUAN CISCOMANI

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the University of Arizona's Flandrau Science Center & Planetarium's 50th Anniversary and the opening of their newest exhibit, *Mysteries of the Cosmos*.

The Science Center & Planetarium started as a result of the efforts of expert University of Arizona scientists and leadership, along with generous funds from the estate of author and Tucson visitor Grace H. Flandrau in 1972.

Recognizing the University of Arizona's excellence in astronomy and space science, the Arizona Board of Regents approved the formation of Flandrau that same year, and construction began in 1974.

From the moment the Flandrau Science Center & Planetarium opened its doors in 1975, it has provided visitors with immersive educational experiences.

Through the use of tools including interactive displays, digital features, laser light shows, large-scale models, and science lectures, the Flandrau Science Center & Planetarium has made studying the stars accessible to the public.

With the immersion of new planetarium technologies throughout the years, Flandrau has gone through renovations to ensure visitors get a well-rounded and unforgettable experience.

The Science Center & Planetarium has opened several new exhibits since its opening, many of which feature the incredibly talented faculty and their transformational research happening within the College of Science and at the University of Arizona.

The newest exhibit, *Mysteries of the Cosmos: Life in the Universe*, opens tonight. This new interactive exhibit is an exciting milestone that will further strengthen the Science Center & Planetarium's ability to bring the wonder of the stars down to Tucson.

To the Flandrau leadership and staff who have dedicated their time to this extraordinary center, and to the individuals who made the Science Center & Planetarium possible in the first place, I congratulate them on 50 years.

Here's to many more years to come and the future generations who will walk through their doors to learn about our incredible universe.