

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING MAJOR MATTHEW N.
TOPITZER

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 16, 2026

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I proudly salute Major Matthew N. Topitzer for his outstanding service to the United States Army and for the remarkable professionalism he has demonstrated throughout his military career. Major Topitzer has consistently embodied the dedication, integrity, and commitment to excellence that define the finest officers in our Armed Forces.

Major Topitzer's military journey reflects broad operational experience and steadfast leadership. He began his service as a Signal Platoon Leader in the 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade at Camp Humphreys, South Korea, and later led paratroopers in the 112th Signal Battalion at Fort Bragg. His expertise in communications and network operations took him to Special Operations Command—Europe in Stuttgart, Germany, and to Fort Belvoir, where he served as a technical project's leader for the 1st Capabilities Integration Group. In 2020, he deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan, serving as Deputy CJ6 for NATO Special Operations Joint Task Force—Afghanistan.

I had the privilege of working closely with Major Topitzer when he served as my Defense Fellow through the Army Congressional Fellowship Program. His thoughtful counsel, analytical rigor, and deep understanding of defense policy were invaluable to my office. Following his fellowship, he continued his exemplary service as a Congressional Budget Liaison to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Financial Management and Comptroller, presenting key research, development, and intelligence portfolios before Congress.

Major Topitzer's achievements also include earning a Master of Legislative Affairs from George Washington University and completing advanced military education, including SERE High-Risk, Airborne School, and the Interagency Communications Course. He further demonstrates his commitment to service through his role as a White House Military Social Aide.

It is an honor to commend Major Topitzer for his distinguished service to the Army and the Nation. I extend my warmest congratulations to Matthew and his wife Ana as they continue this journey of service together.

HONORING CAPTAIN ISAAC
CAMACHO

HON. TONY GONZALES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 16, 2026

Mr. TONY GONZALES of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Captain

Isaac Camacho, a true American hero whose courage continues to inspire generations. Born on June 3, 1937, in Fabens, Texas, he moved to El Paso at the age of 13 after the passing of his father. He graduated from Jefferson High School in 1955 and immediately enlisted in the United States Army, joining the Airborne Infantry of the 11th Airborne Division. His dedication and skill led him to the elite ranks of the U.S. Army Special Forces, serving with the 1st Special Forces Group.

Mr. Speaker, Captain Camacho's service is marked by one of the most extraordinary stories of the Vietnam War. On November 22, 1963, during his second tour, he and three fellow soldiers were captured by Viet Cong forces at Camp Hiep Hoa. He endured more than 20 months in captivity under brutal conditions. Yet, his determination to return home never faltered. On July 9, 1965, during a heavy monsoon, he escaped by slipping through the bars of his cage and evading his captors for four days until encountering U.S. forces. He became the first American service member to escape from a Viet Cong POW camp.

His return home brought nationwide celebration. President Lyndon B. Johnson, Congressman Richard White, and El Paso Mayor Judson Williams personally honored him. But the most heartfelt recognition came from his mother, who had prayed for her son's return throughout his long captivity.

Captain Camacho's military awards reflect his extraordinary valor: the Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, two Purple Hearts, the Bronze Star, the Prisoner of War Medal, and numerous commendations. He also earned the Combat Infantryman Badge, Master Parachutist Badge, and multiple foreign parachutist honors. In 2009, he was inducted as a Distinguished Member of the Special Forces Regiment.

After retiring from the Army, he continued serving his country through a successful career with the U.S. Postal Service.

Mr. Speaker, Captain Isaac Camacho's heroism, strength, and devotion to duty stand as an enduring example of American resilience.

HONORING CYNTHIA ANN
RODRIGUES

HON. WILLIAM R. KEATING

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 16, 2026

Mr. KEATING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the life of Cynthia Ann Rodrigues of Westport, Massachusetts.

Born to parents, Joseph and Laurine Botelho, Cynthia was raised in Fall River, Massachusetts, where she gained a passion for protecting workers' rights from a young age. At 16, Cynthia began working in the garment industry as a machine operator and became an active organizer with her union, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers

Union, which eventually became UNITE—HERE, AFL—CIO.

Cynthia's people skills and competence helped her to efficiently resolve disagreements on the shop floor, which quickly gained her recognition among her colleagues. Over the years, she continued to move through the ranks of the union, starting as a steward and eventually becoming a business agent, notably one of the first female business agents on the New England Joint Board. Throughout her decades with UNITE—HERE, AFL—CIO, Cynthia established English classes in union shops across New England and was responsible for managing and overseeing the collective bargaining agreements of over 1,500 members across the New England region. After working as a business agent for 22 years, Cynthia retired from UNITE—HERE, AFL—CIO in 2005, but she never fully retired from her work as a labor activist and organizer.

For 30 years, Cynthia served as the President of the Greater Southeastern Massachusetts Labor Council and was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the New Bedford/Cape Cod Labor Council prior to her role as president. Additionally, she was Vice President of the Massachusetts AFL—CIO, representing Southeastern Massachusetts until 2017, and served on the Steering Committee and Advisory Board of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Labor Education Center.

Sadly, we lost Cynthia too soon at the age of 81 on January 1, 2026. In addition to her impactful work as a union organizer, Cynthia enjoyed spending time with her friends and loved ones, camping, playing Bingo, and supporting the Wish Come True organization and was the beloved wife of the late John Rodrigues.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to honor Cynthia Rodrigues, and I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing her commitment to supporting and advancing workers' rights and bettering the lives of those around her.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF TIM
MIKESKA

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 16, 2026

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I commend Tim Mikeska for being named Taylor's Outstanding Citizen. This well-deserved honor recognizes a lifetime of tireless service and outstanding contributions to the City of Taylor and the Central Texas community.

Tim's commitment to public service is reflected in his leadership on the Taylor City Council, the Williamson County Health District Board, the Taylor Economic Development Corporation, and the Greater Taylor Chamber of Commerce. His efforts have helped build a stronger, more resilient community where families and businesses can flourish.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

As CEO of Mikeska's Bar-B-Q Inc., Tim has carried on a proud family tradition bringing the bold flavors of Texas barbecue to tables across the country, and even internationally to Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the United Kingdom. His work has earned national recognition through features on Food Nation on the Food Network, The CBS Early Show, and the Travel Channel.

Beyond the restaurant, Tim is a licensed EMT-Paramedic, instructor, and adjunct professor in Emergency Medical Services. In 1982, he founded the Taylor Heartsaver program, which has taught CPR to over 400 residents of east Williamson County. He also serves as a Command Pilot with Angel Flight South Central, Air Care Alliance, and Pilots N Paws, where he volunteers his time and aircraft to transport patients and animals in need of medical care.

Tim Mikeska's legacy speaks to the highest values we Texans hold dear. Through financial contributions, spiritual guidance, and feeding those in need, Tim's legacy will be felt for generations. I join the City of Taylor, his family, and all of Central Texas in congratulating him on this well-deserved honor. I thank him for a lifetime of service and wish him continued success and blessings in the years to come.

HONORING THE PASSING OF
ROBERT "GIBBY" GIBSON

HON. THOMAS H. KEAN, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 16, 2026

Mr. KEAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the passing of Robert "Gibby" Gibson, a World War II veteran, and lifelong native of Hampton, New Jersey.

Mr. Gibson was drafted into the United States Army in 1943. There he trained as an anti-aircraft artilleryman. Mr. Gibson bravely landed in the second wave at Utah Beach during the historic "D-Day" invasion. Following this Mr. Gibson served through Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, and continued his service into Germany until the end of the war. When Mr. Gibson returned home, he devoted his life to serving the people of Hampton, New Jersey. Mr. Gibson proudly served as a fire fighter, fire chief, councilman, and mayor, demonstrating his strong commitment to his community. As a humble and devoted man, Mr. Gibson, opened up and shared his wartime experiences with students and fellow citizens. He looked to educate others on his heroic experiences, using his personal journey to inspire future generations. Gibby passed away peacefully on January 12, 2026.

Mr. Speaker, as I recognize the passing of Robert "Gibby" Gibson, I am pleased to commend him for being an integral part of the Hampton area. I invite my colleagues to join me in honoring this heroic gentleman, truly dedicated to serving his country and community with courage, bravery, and commitment.

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF
PETE'S ACE HARDWARE

HON. ERIC SWALWELL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 16, 2026

Mr. SWALWELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Pete's Ace Hardware on the momentous occasion of its 100th anniversary, marking a century of service to the community of Castro Valley, California.

Founded in 1926 by Peter Selmeccki, Pete's Ace Hardware proudly holds the distinction of being the oldest business in Castro Valley. Peter and his wife, Mary, were hardworking Hungarian immigrants who built their livelihood through determination, resilience, and a deep commitment to their community. Together, they opened their store on historic Castro Valley Boulevard, where it remains a local landmark to this day.

In its early years, the business ambitiously offered both hardware supplies and automobile spray-painting services. While balancing these two ventures proved challenging, the Selmeccki family ultimately focused their full energy on the hardware business, laying the foundation for long-term success.

Initially serving local ranchers and farmers, the store evolved in tandem with the growing community. As Castro Valley expanded, so too did the business, adapting its inventory to meet the needs of contractors and homeowners. Throughout its growth, Pete's Ace Hardware remained deeply rooted in the community it served, thriving thanks to the loyalty of its customers and the support of trusted suppliers.

Pete and Mary's dedication to their business extended well beyond their lifetimes. Following their retirement and passing, their sons, Frank and Ernie, assumed leadership and guided the store through a period of growth and modernization.

Today, Pete's Ace Hardware is now a fourth-generation family-owned business led by Ernie's daughter Linda, her husband Jeff, and their son Jason.

As Pete's Ace Hardware celebrates this extraordinary milestone, I commend the Selmeccki family for their enduring commitment and entrepreneurial spirit. I extend my warmest congratulations to Linda, Jeff, and Jason as they continue to serve the Castro Valley community for generations to come.

SALUTING THE SERVICE AND SACRIFICE OF FIRST LIEUTENANT
CHARLES W. "WOODY" MCCOOK

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 16, 2026

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I salute the life and legacy of 1st Lieutenant Charles W. "Woody" McCook, a World War II hero and devoted patriot, who joined the angels in July of 1948. His courage, sacrifice, and unwavering sense of duty exemplify the very best of the American spirit. Though decades have passed since his final mission, his story continues to inspire all who cherish freedom and understand the cost of preserving it.

Affectionately known as "Woody" to his loved ones and fellow service members, Lt. McCook served as the pilot of a B-25C Mitchell aircraft during the Second World War. Answering his Nation's call, he bravely flew into the dangerous jungles of Japanese-occupied Burma, now known as Myanmar. His missions were perilous, often requiring low-altitude attacks and precise coordination in an environment where survival was never guaranteed.

For 82 years, Lt. McCook was listed as Missing in Action. Thanks to the tireless efforts of military recovery teams, his remains have finally returned home to Georgetown, Texas, where his family and community, after decades of unanswered questions, can now lay him to rest with the honor and dignity he earned.

Lt. McCook's service reminds us that freedom is not free. It is secured through the bravery of those willing to give everything in its defense. His return brings long-awaited closure to his family and a renewed appreciation from his country. As we mourn the passing of Lt. McCook, his presence was a blessing to all who knew him. The positive impact he had on the lives of others will live on and remain forever in our hearts.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY
OF LAWRENCE JAMES JOHNSON

HON. SYLVIA R. GARCIA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 16, 2026

Ms. GARCIA of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Lawrence James Johnson of Houston, Texas, a devoted man of faith, a loving husband and father, and a tireless servant to his community.

Lawrence James Johnson was born on May 24, 1954, in Houston, Texas, to L.J. Johnson and Erma Lee Dixon Johnson. He attended schools in the Houston Independent School District, including 8th Avenue School, Hogg Middle School, Booker T. Washington High School, and Reagan High School. From an early age, Lawrence was shaped by a strong and prominent Christian family. He was baptized by his grandfather, Rev. C.D. Dixon, at Greater Mt. Pillow Missionary Baptist Church, and his faith remained a steady foundation throughout his life.

Lawrence's spiritual journey was marked by devotion and growth. Guided by the promise of Jeremiah 29:11, he rededicated his life to Christ and committed himself fully to living with purpose declaring, "No turning back." He became not only a church member, but a faithful disciple, deepening his walk and dedicating himself to service.

At The Community of Faith Church, Lawrence was a constant presence and a reliable servant. He supported the church's growth and participated in major milestones over the years. He served wherever he was needed, embodying a spirit of responsibility, humility, and love for others.

On March 8, 1998, Lawrence was ordained as a Deacon at The Community of Faith by Bishop James Dixon II. He served with passion and compassion, including through the Overcomers Group and the Prison Ministry, sharing his personal testimony to uplift others and remind them that what we do in service to Christ is what endures.