

school year, 196 students participated in the program, along with an additional 33 students in the summer program.

Her vision for hands-on learning opportunities has resulted in valuable experience for students and job placements immediately after high school, benefiting students, local businesses, and the broader community. She has also consistently worked to improve the work-study curriculum to better reflect evolving workforce needs.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent such a dedicated public servant, and I ask my colleagues to join me in acknowledging Michelle Kidd for her selfless service to the Crystal Lake community.

CONGRATULATING ELI DEBEVEC
UPON HIS ACCEPTANCE TO THE
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
ACADEMY

HON. RICK W. ALLEN

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my constituent, Eli Debevec, upon his acceptance to the United States Coast Guard Academy.

As a future cadet, he will be joining the ranks of the world's most elite maritime security force, guided by the motto: "Semper Paratus," meaning "Always Ready."

The service and sacrifice of America's military personnel have safeguarded our Nation since its inception, protecting the Nation's ports, waterways, and coastal areas from evolving threats.

Throughout our history, American servicemembers have demonstrated tremendous courage and strength, beating back tyranny to the ends of the earth.

I am proud to endorse Eli's acceptance to the United States Coast Guard Academy; I am confident that his talents will distinguish him among his peers during his time at the Academy and thereafter.

I congratulate Eli, and I know that he will make this Nation proud.

RECOGNIZING DESCENDANTS OF
TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERANS

HON. HILLARY J. SCHOLTEN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Ms. SCHOLTEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and support the thousands of Americans whose lives have been shaped by the cost of war: our Nation's toxic-exposed veterans and their children and grandchildren.

In my district, the 180th Transportation Company based in Muskegon, Michigan, answered our Nation's call for service. They served in Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and most of their members have proudly called West Michigan home. Their families carry the weight of that service long after they return, including the lasting impact of exposure to toxic chemicals during their service. It is their stories, and the stories of families like them across the country, that

bring me to the floor today. We have the unique and important opportunity this Congress to stand by these veterans and their families in passing Congresswoman DEBBIE DINGELL's H.R. 1769, the Molly R. Loomis Research for Descendants of Toxic Exposed Veterans Act. I am a proud cosponsor of this bill, and I am calling on my colleagues to join me.

This legislation bears the name of Molly Loomis, whose story puts a human face to an issue that has gone unaddressed for far too long. Molly is the daughter of a U.S. Navy veteran who was exposed to Agent Orange during his service aboard the USS *Ogden*. Unfortunately, her father passed away from cancer related to this toxic exposure. Molly developed a spinal cord illness known as Spina Bifida, which was also caused by exposure to Agent Orange. She was unable to receive aid from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for this condition because she herself was not a veteran. A previous bill, H.R. 1769, the Toxic Exposure Research Act, became law in 2016 and authorized research into birth defects associated with chemical exposures during military service. Yet the VA did not act on it, determining the research was not feasible because it would focus on descendants rather than veterans themselves. The sons and daughters of our veterans were deemed, in effect, outside the scope of this pressing issue. That must change today.

Molly's story is not unique. Countless families in my own district share this story as well. Across the country, the children and grandchildren of veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange, burn pits, and other toxic chemicals are living with conditions that medicine is only just beginning to treat. Research has identified birth defects and health conditions in the offspring of exposed veterans, including spina bifida, heart deformities, autoimmune disorders, and many other rare conditions.

These families have waited decades for answers. The hidden cost of war is real; it goes beyond generational divides and deserves our full attention. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to amplify the voices of our veterans and their families. I want to recognize the bravery of our Nation's toxic-exposed veterans and honor the strength and resilience of their descendants. Their lives remind us that a true commitment to service members and veterans must also extend to their families, who, in their meaningful and heartbreaking stories, have also made brave sacrifices for our Nation.

RECOGNIZING WORLD REFUGEE
DAY

HON. GWEN MOORE

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize World Refugee Day, which takes place on June 20 of each year, where we recognize the strength and resilience of those who have been displaced from their homes because of war or persecution.

On July 28, 2026, we will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the landmark international agreement that defined the term "refugee" as an individual who has

been forced to flee their home country and is unable to return due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group and/or political opinion. The Convention also established the principle that nations should not forcibly return people to situations where they face harm.

Today, there are an estimated 117 million displaced people who had been forced from their homes worldwide, including more than 41.6 million refugees (over 30 percent of whom are children) and 9 million asylum seekers. Fewer than 1 percent of refugees are ever resettled.

Sadly, as we celebrate this day, the number of refugees globally is only increasing. It has been estimated that about 2.4 million refugees worldwide will require resettlement in 2027 because they remain at risk in the countries where they currently live and cannot safely return home. I recently had one young woman come into my office who lived 17 years in a refugee camp. She grew up with such uncertainty but now has been resettled in our country and ready to contribute to our society and community.

My home state of Wisconsin has benefited from refugees. This includes the Hmong who fought as our allies during the Vietnam era and who fled persecution and death to come to the United States as refugees to start a new life after the war. What would have happened to them if our Nation closed its doors?

But it is not just the Hmong. Wisconsin has opened its doors to our neighbors from many other countries. Since 1975, Wisconsin has provided a home to over 50 different groups of refugees who have contributed to our communities in all sorts of ways from cultural to economical. Refugees help Wisconsin's economy by actively participating in the workforce, paying taxes, starting businesses, buying homes, and becoming U.S. citizens.

Yet, as we commemorate World Refugee Day, refugees remain under siege.

The Trump administration is going after refugees and asylum seekers even though refugees are one of the most closely scrutinized and vetted groups that come to our country.

Yet, the Trump Administration has put a needless and harmful pause on the U.S. refugee program. A pause that is nearing two years for many individuals who have already lived decades in limbo. That decision canceled flights oversight for who were hours away from being able to finally rebuild their lives in our Nation. And that is just one of many actions that have effectively closed our Nation's doors to most refugees.

These policies do not make our Nation any safer and put at risk the lives and well-being of refugees fleeing violence and persecution, including Iranians, Afghans, Burmese Rohingya, Sudanese and Somalis, among many others.

Refugees contribute greatly to our communities. Our own laws, such as the Refugee Act of 1980, recognize the historic policy of the United States to respond to the urgent needs of persons subject to persecution in their homelands, including, where appropriate, humanitarian assistance for their care and maintenance, efforts to promote opportunities for resettlement or voluntary repatriation, admission to this country of refugees of special humanitarian concern to the United States, and transitional assistance to refugees in the United States.

On this World Refugee Day, let us recommit to keep supporting the safety, health, and well being of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing war, persecution, or torture and welcome them, not turn a blind eye.

The search for protection, peace, hope, and religious and political freedom is what spawned our own Nation whose 250th birthday we will soon be celebrating.

As we celebrate World Refugee Day this year, let us honor the strength of those who have been forced to flee their homes with no safe way back and support a future where everyone is given the opportunity to thrive, no matter where they come from.

RECOGNIZING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BELVIDERE LIONS CLUB

HON. BILL FOSTER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Belvidere Lions Club as it celebrates its 80th anniversary, marking eight decades of outstanding community service and dedication to meeting local needs.

Since its founding in 1946, the Belvidere Lions Club has been a hands-on, hardworking organization, sponsoring numerous impactful and memorable projects throughout the community. Guided by its motto, "We Serve," the Club remains committed to active community engagement and to strengthening the community it serves. One of the Club's top priorities is vision health, and since 2023, it has screened more than 7,000 children and adults.

Over the years, the Club has supported downtown revitalization efforts and donated a decorative clock to the City of Belvidere, now serving as the centerpiece of Hub Plaza. It continues to serve the community through projects and partnerships, including the Boone County Fair, Belvidere Youth Baseball, Fish 'n Fun, Camp Lions, Habitat for Humanity, and many others. The Club's current initiative is the development of an inclusive playground to ensure that children of all abilities can play and interact together.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize the Belvidere Lions Club for its many accomplishments, and I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating its 80 years of commitment to service, leadership, and compassion, the values that define Lions Clubs International.

HONORING USS ALEXANDRIA (SSN-757)

HON. DONALD S. BEYER, JR.

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the distinguished service of the USS *Alexandria* (SSN-757) as the United States Navy prepares to decommission this remarkable submarine after decades of faithful service to the defense of our Nation.

USS *Alexandria* was commissioned on June 29, 1991, and will have an inactivation ceremony on the 35th anniversary of that date, on

June 29, 2026. Submarines are known as the "silent service," but I can tell you that she had 5 deployments in the Western Pacific and 10 deployments in the European Theater. She was deployed on September 11, 2001, and stood ready to act if needed, on scene but unseen.

During her 35-year lifespan, her crew executed over 30 special operations vital to our national security. They were underway on nuclear power for over one million miles. She participated in joint training exercises with other nations, including testing operability and tactics in Arctic waters and surfacing through the ice. She made poll visits around the world as an ambassador and to communicate our Navy's presence, assurance of freedom of navigation, and dedication to preserving peace. Her annual unclassified operations reports are on file at the Navy's History and Heritage Command.

As the USS *Alexandria* concludes her active service, we pay tribute not only to the submarine itself, but also to the thousands of sailors, officers, civilian mariners, shipbuilders, maintenance workers, and military families whose hard work and sacrifices made her missions possible.

The decommissioning of the USS *Alexandria* marks the end of a proud chapter in naval history. While her service at sea may be ending, her legacy will endure through the men and women who served aboard and supported her. They embody the enduring values of duty, honor, and country.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the extraordinary service of the USS *Alexandria* (SSN-757) and in expressing our gratitude to all who contributed to her distinguished record of service to the United States of America.

HONORING NORTHWEST INDIANA FORUM ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR KAY NELSON

HON. FRANK J. MRVAN

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Mr. MRVAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Kay Nelson upon her retirement after a distinguished career dedicated to environmental stewardship, economic development, public service, and the advancement of Indiana's workforce and industrial economy.

Throughout her remarkable career, Kay Nelson has worked tirelessly to improve our environment, strengthen our industrial base, and support working families throughout Northwest Indiana and our Nation. Her leadership, expertise, and commitment to public service have left an enduring impact on countless communities and organizations. After decades of service, she has announced her well-deserved retirement, concluding a career that has spanned local, regional, state, national, and international responsibilities.

Since joining the Northwest Indiana Forum in 1998 as Environmental Affairs Director, Kay has played an instrumental role in advancing initiatives that balance environmental policy with economic growth. As a leader within Northwest Indiana's premier economic development organization, she has contributed to

virtually every major environmental initiative in our region during the past quarter century. Her work has supported business attraction, retention, and expansion while helping communities understand the long-term environmental and economic benefits of sustainable development.

Throughout her tenure, Kay has successfully brought together businesses, government agencies, and community stakeholders to address complex environmental challenges. She has helped shape regional policy positions, built consensus on matters of local and national significance, and served as a trusted voice representing both environmental interests and the business community. Her ability to bridge diverse perspectives has strengthened Northwest Indiana's reputation as a place where environmental responsibility and economic growth can work hand in hand.

Prior to joining the Forum, Kay established an impressive record of public service through numerous leadership roles, including Industrial Pretreatment Coordinator, U.S. EPA Wastewater Expansion Construction Grant Administrator, Brownfield Redevelopment Administrator, and Director of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management—Northwest Regional Office. She also represented Indiana at the national level as a member of the U.S. EPA's Iron and Steel Federal Advisory Committee Act group.

Kay's influence has extended far beyond Northwest Indiana. A nationally respected leader in Great Lakes policy, she served on the negotiating team for the Great Lakes—St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact and continues to serve as a Great Lakes Commissioner after appointments by Governor Mike Pence and reappointments by Governor Eric Holcomb. Her efforts ensured the adoption of the Compact, a landmark agreement signed into Indiana law in 2008 that protects one of our Nation's most valuable natural resources. She has also served on the Volkswagen Trust Fund Settlement Board and numerous environmental advisory committees focused on the future of the Great Lakes region.

Her extensive service includes leadership roles with the Great Lakes Advisory Board, the U.S. EPA Region 5 Great Lakes National Program Office, the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission's Environmental and Transportation Committees, the Indiana Manufacturers Association, and the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, where she served as president of its Environmental Committee. Her commitment to community service has also benefited organizations including Hospice of the Calumet Area, the Dunes Learning Center, and the Shirley Heinze Land Trust.

A graduate of Purdue University, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources and Environmental Science with a focus on water quality, Kay has consistently demonstrated excellence throughout her career. Her many honors include receiving Indiana's highest civilian distinction, the Sagamore of the Wabash, on two separate occasions from Governor Mitch Daniels and Governor Eric Holcomb. She has also twice received the Distinguished Hoosier Award and has been recognized as Volunteer of the Year by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and as an Influential Woman of Northwest Indiana in Economic Development.

Her innovative leadership has been recognized repeatedly by the Society of Innovators at Purdue University Northwest, including honors for her contributions to the Great Lakes—