

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—

St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, the Grand Calumet River restoration effort, and the Northwest Indiana Forum's "Ignore the Region" initiative.

While Kay Nelson's accomplishments and accolades are extraordinary, those who have had the privilege of working alongside her know that her greatest legacy is the respect, mentorship, and friendship she has provided to others. She has been a tireless advocate for Northwest Indiana, a trusted advisor to public officials, a champion for environmental responsibility, and a steadfast supporter of economic opportunity for working families.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Indiana's 1st Congressional District and the United States House of Representatives, I congratulate Kay Nelson on her distinguished career and extend my deepest gratitude for her decades of service. I wish her continued health, happiness, and fulfillment in retirement, and I thank her for the lasting contributions she has made to our region, our state, and our Nation.

HONORING KATHY EILER ON HER
DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SYSTEM

HON. MARK TAKANO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Kathy Eiler's nearly 30 years of service to the University of California system as she retires as Senior Director of Federal Relations at the University of California, Riverside.

Kathy's connection to the University of California has been a career-defining commitment. Over nearly three decades, she has served as a tireless advocate, a skilled navigator of the complex landscape of federal policy, and a trusted voice for the University of California's students, faculty, researchers, and staff.

Since joining UC Riverside in November 2018 as Senior Director of Federal Relations, she has brought her wealth of experience and institutional knowledge to advocate on behalf of one of the most diverse research universities in the Nation.

Her work has helped UC Riverside remain the number one school for social mobility in the country and placed the Inland Empire at the center of innovation in medicine, sustainability, and agriculture.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing and congratulating Kathy Eiler for her exceptional service and in wishing her all the very best in the years ahead.

CELEBRATING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN OF UNITY JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION IN AURORA, ILLINOIS

HON. BILL FOSTER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Juneteenth Celebration hosted by the

African American Men of Unity (AAMOU) at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Park in Aurora, Illinois.

For twenty-five years, this annual celebration has served as a powerful reminder of our Nation's ongoing journey toward freedom, equality, and justice. What began as a local effort to commemorate Juneteenth has grown into one of the Fox Valley region's most enduring and meaningful celebrations of African American history, culture, and achievement.

Founded in 1999, the African American Men of Unity has long been dedicated to uplifting the community through mentorship, education, leadership development, and service. Under the leadership of Founder and Executive Director Ricky Rodgers, AAMOU has worked to create opportunities for young people, strengthen families, and promote unity throughout Aurora and the surrounding region.

Through their annual Juneteenth celebration, AAMOU has created a space where residents of all backgrounds can come together to reflect on the significance of June 19, 1865, the day enslaved African Americans in Galveston, Texas finally learned of their freedom more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. The event honors the resilience, perseverance, and contributions of African Americans while educating future generations about our Nation's history.

Over the past twenty-five years, the celebration has featured educational exhibits, historical tributes, storytelling, music, cultural performances, youth activities, athletic competitions, local vendors, and opportunities for community engagement. It has become a cherished tradition that brings together families, neighbors, civic leaders, and organizations in a spirit of remembrance, learning, and unity.

As we mark this milestone 25th anniversary, we also recognize the dedicated volunteers, organizers, community partners, and supporters whose commitment has sustained this celebration for a quarter century. Their work embodies the spirit of service and unity that strengthens our communities and enriches our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize this milestone anniversary, and I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the African American Men of Unity and all those who have contributed to the success of this celebration.

RECOGNIZING AND HONORING
PRINCIPAL MARC PASCENTE

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Principal Marc Pascente for his extraordinary commitment to public education and his unwavering dedication to the students, families, and communities of New York's 7th Congressional District and across New York City.

For more than two decades, Principal Pascente has devoted his career to ensuring that every student has access to a high-quality education and the support necessary to succeed. He began his service with New York City Public Schools in 2001 as a New Lan-

guage teacher through the Teaching Fellows program at Theodore Roosevelt High School in the Bronx. From the very beginning, he distinguished himself as an educator committed to equity, inclusion, and empowering students from diverse backgrounds.

In 2006, he assumed the role of Assistant Principal at Belmont Preparatory High School, where he continued to foster a student-centered environment grounded in growth, opportunity, and academic excellence. His leadership and vision would later reach new heights when he became Principal of Grover Cleveland High School in Ridgewood, Queens at the start of the 2018–2019 school year.

Throughout his tenure at Grover Cleveland High School, Principal Pascente placed the needs of students at the forefront of every decision. His transformative leadership revitalized key school facilities, including the auditorium, library, and cafeteria, creating welcoming spaces where students could learn, grow, and thrive. His advocacy on behalf of young people, particularly those from underserved and vulnerable communities, has opened doors and expanded opportunities for countless students.

As the facilitator of the My Brother's Keeper program, Principal Pascente inspired young men to pursue academic excellence, leadership, and personal integrity. He also broadened students' horizons by championing educational field trips to Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and Boston, providing opportunities to engage with history, culture, and higher education firsthand.

Under Principal Pascente's leadership, Grover Cleveland High School became a model of innovation and inclusion. The school piloted the Civic Seal program, expanded participation in the New York State Seal of Biliteracy to include speakers of Spanish, Italian, Mandarin, and Polish, and welcomed both a bilingual GED program and a District 75 program. These initiatives strengthened the school's reputation as a place where all learners are valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

Beyond the programs and accomplishments, Principal Pascente's greatest legacy is the culture of belonging he cultivated. He has consistently amplified student voices, nurtured talent, and demonstrated compassion, integrity, and an unwavering belief in the potential of every young person who walked through the school's doors.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Principal Marc Pascente for his distinguished public service career. His legacy will continue to shape the lives of students and strengthen our communities for years to come.

HONORING THE CAREER OF
ROBERT TESTA

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the commendable career of Mr. Robert Testa as he retires this month after 11 years of dedicated service as Assistant Superintendent of Vernon Public Schools. Vernon Public Schools is an outstanding public education system benefiting from the tireless work