

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING THE DALE CITY VOLUNTEER FIRE & RESCUE VALOR AWARD RECIPIENTS

HON. EUGENE SIMON VINDMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 2026

Mr. VINDMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate the Dale City Volunteer Fire & Rescue Valor Award recipients, recognizing the extraordinary bravery and selfless service demonstrated by the department's firefighters, paramedics, and rescue personnel. These awards reflect the courageous actions of the dedicated men and women who put themselves in harm's way to protect and serve the community in its most critical moments.

As we mark the 40th anniversary of the Valor Awards, we are proud to celebrate this tradition that has stood as the highest recognition of courage within the Dale City Volunteer Fire & Rescue. Since inception, these awards have honored generations of first responders who answered the call when it mattered most.

Each recipient exemplifies true valor, facing danger without hesitation, providing life-saving aid, and prioritizing the safety of others in the most challenging emergencies. Their courage and compassion strengthen the bonds within our community, fostering trust, resilience, and a shared sense of security. Today, we honor their collective bravery and commitment to public service.

Whether responding to fires, medical emergencies, or natural disasters, these individuals demonstrate an unyielding commitment to preserving life and property. Their professionalism and readiness in the face of uncertainty set an example for us all and serve as a reminder of the impact that first responders have on the lives of those they protect. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the Dale City Volunteer Fire & Rescue team for their remarkable contributions to our community.

CELEBRATING U.S. GRADUATES OF THE LATIN AMERICAN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE (ELAM)

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 2026

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commend the exceptional commitment of the 2026 graduating class from the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in Havana, Cuba. These five courageous and compassionate individuals are now part of a legacy of global medical solidarity that began 26 years ago when Cuba offered full scholarships to students from underserved communities around the world, including the United States.

In partnership with the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), the

U.S. ELAM program has graduated 256 physicians since its inception. Many of these graduates come from communities that have historically been denied access to medical education. These individuals have chosen a career path focused on service rather than profit, prioritizing community health over personal comfort.

Currently, 101 graduates are making significant contributions to public health across various fields, including integrative medicine, research, education, and nonprofit work. Additionally, 144 graduates are either fully licensed or participating in residency programs in over 30 U.S. states, with many practicing in areas designated as health professional shortage areas or medically underserved communities.

Seventy percent of the program's graduates are women, and eighty percent are Black and Brown, reflecting the diversity of the broader student body at the school as a whole.

These graduates faced unique challenges, including studying medicine in a second language, adapting to a different healthcare system, and navigating the geopolitical impacts of the U.S. blockade on Cuba. Despite these obstacles, they persisted. Their achievements are not just academic; they are also profoundly political, demonstrating what is possible when healthcare and medical education are recognized as fundamental human rights.

Mr. Speaker, during a time when our healthcare system struggles with racial and economic disparities, these doctors remind us that another model is possible—one founded on equity, internationalism, and public service.

On behalf of Mississippi's 2nd Congressional District, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the U.S. ELAM Class of 2026. May their work continue to heal, inspire, and remind us that solidarity can indeed save lives.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PAUL A. GOSAR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 2026

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Speaker, on the vote on the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, I intended to vote "Yea." Unfortunately, due to a malfunction of my electronic voting card, my vote was not recorded. This was an unusual occurrence, as my electronic voting card successfully registered my vote on the immediately preceding vote. By the time the malfunction was discovered, the vote had closed and the period for recording votes had expired, preventing my vote from being officially recorded.

I strongly support the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act. Had my voting card functioned properly, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 224.

HONORING THE OCCOQUAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

HON. EUGENE SIMON VINDMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 2026

Mr. VINDMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate the Occoquan Police Department and to recognize one of its distinguished members who has received a Communications Award: Police Officer Alex Budd. While today we recognize Officer Budd, this award reflects the commitment to duty, professionalism, and public safety that defines the entire department.

As we mark the 40th anniversary of the Valor Awards, we are proud to celebrate this tradition that has stood as the highest recognition of courage within the Occoquan Police Department. Since inception, this recognition honors generations of first responders who answered the call when it mattered most.

The impact of such bravery resonates throughout the community. Each courageous act, whether confronting immediate threats, providing aid in moments of crisis, or responding calmly under pressure, demonstrates a profound commitment to the well-being of others. These actions go beyond traditional law enforcement; they embody public service at its highest level.

By recognizing the Occoquan Police Department and Officer Budd today, we not only celebrate their courage, but also the influence that dedicated public service can have on a community. Their heroism strengthens the community, setting a powerful example of what it means to serve with integrity, compassion, and resilience.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the Occoquan Police Department for their remarkable contributions to our community. I also want to personally thank Officer Budd for going above and beyond in his service to others.

CONGRATULATING ELIZABETH MARTÍNEZ GONZÁLEZ

HON. PABLO JOSÉ HERNÁNDEZ

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 2026

Mr. HERNÁNDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Elizabeth Martínez González of Dorado, who will be sworn in as Department Commander of The American Legion, Department of Puerto Rico. Her service to our Nation and leadership within our community exemplify the finest traditions of patriotism and civic engagement.

Elizabeth served nearly fifteen years in the United States Army and Puerto Rico National Guard, rising to the rank of Master Sergeant. Throughout her military career, she distinguished herself in areas of critical responsibility—security operations, emergency preparedness, military police work, recruitment,

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

and retention. Her expertise in chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense earned her recognition as a CBRN specialist. More significantly, she became the first woman to serve on the 22nd Civil Support Team's Weapons of Mass Destruction Survey Team in Puerto Rico, breaking new ground and opening doors for those who followed.

Elizabeth's service took her to missions across the globe—operations in the War on Terror, support at Guantanamo, and humanitarian assistance following Hurricane Katrina. She demonstrated unwavering discipline, courage, and dedication in each assignment.

Her commitment to service did not end with her military career. Elizabeth has devoted herself to advancing the veteran community and our young people through the American Legion, Department of Puerto Rico. She has served as Commander of Post 45 in Dorado, First Vice Commander of the Department, and as Chairwoman of Americanism, Conventions, Communications and Media, and our Youth Oratorical Program. Most recently, she was elected Commander of the Department of Puerto Rico for the 2026–2028 term—making her only the second woman to hold this position in the organization's 103-year history.

In this role, Elizabeth leads efforts to strengthen programs for veterans and young people across Puerto Rico, promoting civic responsibility, constitutional respect, youth leadership, discipline, athletics, education, and community service.

Throughout her journey, as a soldier, as a leader, as a voice for her community, Elizabeth has carried with her the values of Dorado and Puerto Rico. She embodies integrity, perseverance, compassion, and a profound love for our people.

I urge my colleagues and all citizens of Puerto Rico to recognize her example and celebrate her achievements as inspiration for generations to come.

RECOGNIZING THE MERCY HOUSE
BRUNDAGE LANE NAVIGATION
CENTER

HON. DAVID G. VALADAO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 2026

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Mercy House Brundage Lane Navigation Center (BLNC) on five years of dedicated service to the Bakersfield community, providing individuals experiencing homelessness with the support and resources needed to secure stable housing and rebuild their lives.

Since opening its doors in 2021, the Brundage Lane Navigation Center has become a vital resource for some of our community's most vulnerable residents. Beyond offering hundreds of shelter beds, the center serves as a haven for the displaced to receive comprehensive services including case management, storage, transportation assistance, healthcare access, and housing support, helping people move from crisis to stability.

The center's continued growth reflects both its success and the community's commitment

to addressing homelessness. During its first major expansion in 2023, the Brundage Lane Navigation Center added onsite medical services and a Recuperative Care Dorm, helping bridge the gap between healthcare and housing. The center also provides shuttle transportation services that connect residents with essential resources and opportunities throughout Kern County.

Today, the Brundage Lane Navigation Center stands as a cornerstone of Bakersfield's homelessness response system. As Mercy House's first program in Kern County, the center has housed over 500 people while simultaneously providing a level of care and support that extends far beyond traditional shelter services.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in celebrating the Mercy House Brundage Lane Navigation Center's 5th anniversary. Their commitment to ensuring quality, community-focused care will continue to serve as a lifeline for Bakersfield's most vulnerable for many years to come.

HONORING THE PRINCE WILLIAM
COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC
SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS
VALOR AWARD RECIPIENTS

HON. EUGENE SIMON VINDMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 2026

Mr. VINDMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate the Prince William County Department of Public Safety Communications Valor Award recipients, recognizing the extraordinary dedication of those who serve as the critical first line in emergency response.

As we mark the 40th anniversary of the Valor Awards, we are proud to celebrate this tradition that has stood as the highest recognition of courage within the Department. Since inception, these awards have honored generations of first responders who answered the call when it mattered most.

Each recipient exemplifies what it means to act with valor, remaining composed under pressure, coordinating life-saving responses in real time, and providing reassurance and guidance to those facing crisis. The department facilitates the flow of information in a seamless and rapid manner, providing aid, comfort, and instructions to the public prior to the arrival of field resources. Their efforts strengthen public trust and ensure that every emergency begins with clarity, care, and swift action—fostering a safer community. Today, we recognize and celebrate their critical role and exceptional commitment to public service, often carried out behind the scenes but never without impact.

We are deeply grateful for their service and proud to honor the Prince William County Department of Public Safety Communications for their unwavering dedication to the safety and well-being of our community. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the Prince William County Department of Public Safety Communications for their remarkable contributions to our community.

HONORING RAMÓN PADILLA

HON. PABLO JOSÉ HERNÁNDEZ

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 2026

Mr. HERNÁNDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Ramón Padilla, who has concluded his service as Department Commander of The American Legion, Department of Puerto Rico, for the administrative term 2024–2026. His leadership of this historic organization reflects the finest traditions of veteran service and community commitment.

The American Legion, with more than a century of service to veterans and the people of Puerto Rico, carries with it the weight of significant responsibility. Ramón assumed that responsibility with discipline, institutional loyalty, and unwavering commitment to the Legion's mission. His leadership focused on unity, participation, and the strengthening of posts throughout the Department.

During his tenure, Ramón worked to improve the administrative standing of posts across Puerto Rico, ensuring that a significant percentage remained current and in good standing. This effort strengthened the institutional structure of the Department and enhanced its capacity to serve.

Under his administration, the Legion's signature programs flourished, Legion Baseball, the Oratorical Contest, American Legion College, Operation Honor Guard, and the second Honor Flight for veterans were all advanced during his term. These initiatives represent the Legion's commitment to youth development, veteran recognition, and service to our communities.

Beyond programmatic accomplishments, Ramón defended the rights and benefits of veterans, supported military families, and promoted patriotism grounded in service. He demonstrated that leadership in the veteran community is not about position, but about putting the needs of those who served before personal recognition.

Throughout his administrative years, Ramón embodied the values that make the American Legion vital: service, responsibility, fellowship, respect, and commitment to the principle that veterans help veterans. His willingness to serve during a period of considerable institutional responsibility made a meaningful difference in the lives of legionnaires, veterans, their families, and the communities the Legion touches.

The Department of Puerto Rico is stronger because of his leadership. The legacy he leaves behind—one of service, strengthened programs, and renewed commitment to veteran advocacy—will benefit Puerto Rico for years to come.

I urge all citizens of Puerto Rico to recognize Ramón Padilla's distinguished service and his enduring example of leadership, integrity, and devotion to those who have answered the call to serve.