

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMERICA

HON. BEN CLINE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Happy Birthday America, a cherished Independence Day tradition in Staunton, Virginia, as it joins communities across the Nation in celebrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence through the America250 initiative.

Founded in 1970 by the Statler Brothers, Happy Birthday America has spent more than five decades fostering civic pride, community engagement, and appreciation for the ideals upon which our Nation was founded. Designated an official America250 Block Party and VA250 Commemorative Partner, this year's celebration highlights Virginia's central role in our country's story.

The event brings together veterans, service members, first responders, youth organizations, and community leaders in a powerful display of patriotism and service. It also honors Virginia's rich musical heritage through performances by Wilson Fairchild and Jimmy Fortune. As thousands gather for the annual parade, festivities, and fireworks, Happy Birthday America stands as a fitting tribute to our Nation's enduring spirit and history.

HONORING CHARLES "SMARTY PANTS" KING, JR.

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Charles "Smarty Pants" King, Jr., a gifted educator, artist, mentor, and servant leader whose life's work has touched the minds and hearts of children throughout Mississippi.

A native of Memphis, Tennessee, Mr. King spent much of his childhood in Battle Creek, Michigan. As a young person, he was optimistic and had a powerful imagination, yet he often felt that traditional classrooms did not allow him to think freely. Rather than allowing that experience to defeat him, he turned it into purpose. He made it his mission to help children think for themselves, use their imaginations, and discover the greatness already inside them.

In 1980, Mr. King founded Smarty Pants Educational Services, choosing the elephant as the face of the organization because, as he explained, it is the largest land mammal. When he moved to Mississippi in 1985 to care for his grandfather, he continued to grow his work and took a "catch them where they are" approach to teaching. He understood that every child does not learn the same way, but every child deserves the opportunity to learn.

Known affectionately as "Smarty Pants," a name that became part of his legal identity, Mr. King used magic, brain teasers, artwork, riddles, and his beloved elephant character to make learning come alive. Those who encountered him quickly learned that his lessons often began with a question, a puzzle, or a moment of wonder. He loved the "whys" in life, and that curiosity allowed him to connect with children in a language they could understand.

Behind every smile and creative lesson was a deeper mission. He taught young people the importance of education, self-love, staying drug-free, making wise choices, and believing in the gifts God placed within them. His guiding belief says it best: "If a child can't learn the way I teach, then I must learn to teach the way he can learn." That statement is more than a motto. It is a testimony of patience, compassion, and commitment to meeting children where they are.

As an artist, Mr. King created thousands of pieces of artwork filled with symbols, puzzles, and hidden lessons. His art was not made simply to be seen. It was made to be studied, questioned, and understood. Through symbols and visual storytelling, he taught Black history, critical thinking, and life lessons in ways that reached young people beyond the walls of a traditional classroom.

In 2024, the Mississippi House of Representatives recognized Mr. King for his many years of service to youth and congratulated him upon his retirement. Though retired, Mr. King's heart for students remains strong, and he still shares his gifts from time to time to encourage, teach, and inspire young learners.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Mr. Charles "Smarty Pants" King, Jr., a living example of imagination in service, education with heart, and the enduring truth that every child deserves to be seen, taught, and inspired.

RECOGNIZING GE AEROSPACE, STROTHER FIELD'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY DURING AMERICA'S SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

HON. RON ESTES

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

Mr. ESTES. Mr. Speaker, on July 11, just a week after our Nation celebrated Independence Day, GE Aerospace, Strother Field in Cowley County celebrated its 75th anniversary.

Our region has a rich aviation history, with pioneers of flight finding our flat plains the perfect place to reach new heights. It was here in the Sunflower State that a budding aviation industry grew, making us the Air Capital of the World. That title does not just represent who we were in the early 1900s, but it remains who we are today. The men and women of GE Aerospace, Strother Field continue the

legacy of those early innovators, and they've been advancing aviation for three-quarters of a century.

GE's presence at Strother Field is an incredible investment and testament to the skilled manufacturing workforce we have here in south central Kansas. It reflects a new element of innovation in our area that specializes in maintenance, repair, and overhaul for GE Aerospace and their military customers. Strother Field and the men and women that have devoted their careers here have brought a more complete manufacturing base to the Air Capital of the World.

While this milestone for Strother Field's impact on aviation manufacturing is impressive by itself, it is even more meaningful that it also coincides with the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Aviation has been an important part of our Nation's history throughout the last century, and GE Aerospace and Strother Field have played significant roles in our past. As we celebrate 250 years and look toward the next 250 years, I have full confidence that GE Aerospace, Strother Field will continue to be a critical piece of our Nation's story.

I look forward to seeing the contributions and growth of GE Aerospace, Strother Field for many years to come. I encourage all Kansans to celebrate its 75th anniversary as we continue celebrating America's semiquincentennial.

HONORING KEVIN WILLIAMS

HON. FREDERICA S. WILSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, from the 24th District, of the great state of Florida, I rise today to recognize and honor 2012 Milken Educator Award recipient, Kevin Williams; the principal at Norwood Elementary School, in Miami Gardens, Florida.

The distinction and a \$25,000 cash prize is given by the California-based Milken Family Foundation, to recognize educators across the country who have boosted student achievement.

Principal Williams has received an A-grade from the state of Florida since 2005 to 2006. Norwood Elementary School has more than 500 students, with about 25 percent enrolled in special education programs.

The Milken Educator Awards were created in 1985 by education reform leader Lowell Milken to celebrate, elevate and activate excellence in the profession. To date, more than 2,500 K-12 teachers, principals and specialists coast to coast have been honored with over \$63 million in individual, unrestricted \$25,000 awards. More than \$135 million has been devoted to the overall program, which includes powerful professional development opportunities throughout the recipients' careers in education.

• 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.

Please join me in honoring Norwood Elementary School Principal Kevin Williams for his commitment and dedication to educating our students in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

RECOGNIZING THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SULLY DISTRICT

HON. JAMES R. WALKINSHAW

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

Mr. WALKINSHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 35th Anniversary of the Sully District, the westernmost supervisor district in Fairfax County, Virginia, which includes communities such as Centreville, Chantilly, Oak Hill, Oakton, and surrounding neighborhoods.

Established following the 1990 Census, the Sully District has grown into a vibrant and diverse community that reflects both the history and future of Northern Virginia. Over the past three and a half decades, the district has experienced significant growth and development while maintaining a strong sense of community and commitment to quality of life for its residents.

The Sully District has long been shaped by thoughtful leadership at the local level. The district's first supervisor, Michael Frey, served from its creation through his retirement after more than two decades in office. During his tenure, he helped guide the district through a period of rapid population growth and transformation, playing a key role in advancing infrastructure, expanding public safety services, supporting youth programs, and preserving community assets. His leadership helped establish the foundation upon which the Sully District continues to thrive today.

Today, the Sully District is represented by Supervisor Kathy Smith, who continues to build on that legacy through her tireless service to the residents of the Sully District. Her leadership reflects an ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of a growing community while ensuring that residents remain connected to local government and services.

As the Sully District marks its 35th anniversary, residents come together to celebrate not only its history but also the people and partnerships that have contributed to its growth and success. This milestone reflects decades of dedication to building a community where families can live, work, and thrive.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Sully District on its 35th anniversary and in recognizing its continued contributions to Fairfax County and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF THE MASTER SERGEANT OMAR J. HUNT

HON. ZACHARY NUNN

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

Mr. NUNN of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Master Sergeant Omar J. Hunt

as he retires after more than two decades of service to our Nation in the United States Air Force. In that time, he became one of the Air Force's most trusted Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance professionals—entrusted with some of the most demanding missions our Nation asks of anyone in uniform.

Omar's work supported critical airborne operations, special operations forces, and national-level intelligence missions. Over his career, Omar logged more than 3,400 flight hours, over 1,750 of them in combat, flying across Europe, Africa, and the Middle East in defense of our Nation and our allies.

I had the privilege of serving alongside Omar on several of those missions, taking off from RAF Mildenhall in the United Kingdom for missions high above the mountains of Afghanistan. In every assignment and on every mission, Omar conducted himself to the highest standards of leadership and effectiveness that we Airmen pride ourselves on. When a mission grew tense, his was the calm the whole crew leaned on—always steady and dependable.

That same standard carried into every leadership role Omar held. At Headquarters Air Combat Command, he became the Air Force's first Airborne ISR Evaluator, building the evaluation standards that still shape how enlisted aircrew are trained today.

Ask anyone who served with Omar, and you'll hear the same thing: he invested in younger Airmen, he led by example, and he left every unit stronger than he found it. That is the truest measure of any career, and Omar met it every single day.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Master Sergeant Omar J. Hunt for his extraordinary service to our Nation, and in wishing him and his family every success in the years ahead.

RECOGNIZING CHIEF BILL DICKINSON

HON. DAVID G. VALADAO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Chief Bill Dickinson for his thirty-two years of dedicated service to Kern County and to congratulate him on his well-earned retirement from the Kern County Probation Department.

Throughout his career, Chief Dickinson has made a lasting impact on communities across the Central Valley by strengthening public safety, promoting accountability, and supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of youth convicted of crimes. Chief Dickinson began his career with the Kern County Probation Department in 1994 as an Extra-Help Group Counselor at the Youth Detention Center before quickly advancing to a full-time Group Counselor. After earning his bachelor's degree in English with a minor in Communications from California State University, Bakersfield, he steadily rose through the department's ranks, serving as a Deputy Probation Officer, Probation Supervisor, Assistant Probation Division Director, and Probation Division

Director of the Youth Detention Center. Just five years later, he was promoted again to Deputy Chief and then appointed by the Superior Court as Chief Probation Officer in August of 2023.

As Chief Probation Officer, he strengthened both public safety and youth rehabilitation by expanding evidence-based programming within juvenile detention facilities. He also led the department's implementation of Senate Bill 823, improving security measures for youth who committed serious and violent offenses. Throughout his tenure, he secured millions of dollars in funding for vital program support, led major Title 15 revisions, and initiated plans to construct a new 15,000-square-foot Youth Recreation Center. Through strong partnerships with county departments and local organizations, Chief Dickinson also helped institute over \$20 million in facility improvements to better support rehabilitation and ensure long-term public safety.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating Chief Bill Dickinson on his thirty-two years of steadfast service to the Kern County community and wishing him a happy, well-deserved retirement.

RECOGNIZING AUDREY WHISMAN FOR BEING NAMED MISS PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEER 2026

HON. LLOYD SMUCKER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

Mr. SMUCKER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate and recognize Audrey Whisman for being named Miss Pennsylvania Volunteer 2026.

Audrey Whisman, a graduate of Manheim Township in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and a student at Gettysburg College, was named Miss Pennsylvania Volunteer 2026. In June, she represented our Commonwealth in the Miss Volunteer America Pageant, a nationwide pageant program oriented toward community service and volunteerism.

In line with the selfless spirit that the pageant promotes, Audrey is an advocate for those affected by selective mutism, an anxiety disorder that she herself has, helping children and educating teachers and parents on the disorder. Audrey has also raised over \$100,000 for a local nonprofit daycare that serves low-income and homeless families and has assisted in the facilitation of hurricane relief.

Since her crowning as Miss Pennsylvania Volunteer last October, Audrey has made 174 appearances across Pennsylvania to promote her selective mutism initiative and has partnered with organizations such as the Salvation Army. All of this took place during her time at Gettysburg College, where she maintained a 4.0 GPA.

I congratulate Audrey Whisman on being named Miss Pennsylvania Volunteer. Having met with her last year, I am continually impressed by her passion and dedication to the community, and I look forward to seeing what she accomplishes next.