

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MR. KEITH ANTHONY BOTTOMS

HON. JOHN GARAMENDI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Mr. Keith Anthony Bottoms, father to my long time Chief of Staff Bradley Bottoms. Throughout his life, Keith was a dedicated father, husband, and brother. His legacy of joy, his dedication to his work and family and his humor will continue to inspire us for years to come.

Born in San Francisco and raised in South San Francisco, Keith married the love of his life, Caroline Connolly Bottoms, on October 25, 1980. Together, they built a life in Pacifica centered on family, on hard work, and on generosity. Keith was a proud and loving father to his daughter, Lauren Bottoms (son-in-law Andrew Stiffler), and his son, Bradley Bottoms, who has spent his career serving California as my Chief of Staff. Keith dedicated himself to ensuring his children had every opportunity, no matter what, and took immense pride in sharing their achievements with anyone who would listen. Keith believed to his core that Lauren and Bradley were the best at whatever they chose to do. And I know he was immensely proud of the children he and Caroline raised.

Keith spent 42 years working as a union automotive technician, a career that reflected his work ethic, skill, and pride in repairing even the most challenging of vehicles. He was incredibly curious and wanted to know how every system and structure functioned. After he retired, he focused his skills on home improvements, confident in his abilities as a carpenter, electrician, and landscaper.

To know Keith was to know his humor. He was funny, playful, and unapologetically sarcastic. He had a rare ability to connect with people—often stopping strangers on the street or at Costco just to say hello, turning quick encounters into deep conversations. He took a genuine interest in others, caring about where they came from and often asking how he could help. Everyone knew Keith—from his Pacifica neighbors, who he talked to while gardening or while working on cars, to the clerk at the local market where he purchased lottery tickets—his curiosity and interest made a profound mark on each of them.

He loved the simple things that brought him joy: long walks in San Pedro Valley Park or at the Pacifica Pier, cheering on the San Francisco Giants and 49ers, debating politics with strangers, and donating twice a week to the lottery fund. He also enjoyed international travel with Caroline and their friends. Keith also took pleasure in his daily rituals that he kept on a tight schedule even until his last days, which included providing Caroline with breakfast in bed at 6:00 am every workday, feeding the squirrels and birds in his backyard, watering the garden, and putting away his neighbor's trash cans every Wednesday morning. These small acts of service gave him purpose every day and his life gave meaning to everyone who knew him.

On behalf of California's 8th Congressional District, I extend my heartfelt condolences to Bradley and Keith's family and friends on their loss. Keith's joy, humor, and work ethic have

left a lasting legacy that forever bettered the lives of everyone he met.

COMMENDING MR. MATTHEW WILLIAMS, JR.

HON. FREDERICA S. WILSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commend retired mail clerk, Mr. Matthew Williams, Jr., an ardent and honorable member of the United States Postal Service for 32 years, who began his career as a truck driver before rising through the ranks to become a mail clerk, and I include in the RECORD the following proclamation in his honor:

Whereas, Mr. Williams has received numerous awards and accolades for his enthusiastic performance during his tenure including perfect attendance, achieving over 1,500 hours of sick leave, and a dedication to service award;

Whereas, Mr. Williams provided an invaluable service to his country as a member of the United States Army in both Vietnam and Korea, achieving the rank of Sergeant before being honorably discharged in 1975;

Whereas, Mr. Williams' unwavering devotion to God has been evidenced by his ministration as Deacon, Assistant Superintendent of Sunday School, and Usher at Greater New Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church;

Whereas, Mr. Williams has been the loving and devoted husband of Sandra Williams for 37 years, father of Senior Master Chief Heerey C. Gaston, Jr., Tameka W. Jones, Monique W. Diggins, and Matthew B. Williams, III, and grandfather of nine grandchildren; and

Now, therefore, be it resolved that I, Frederica S. Wilson, a member of the United States House of Representatives, representing the 24th Congressional District of Florida, commend Mr. Matthew Williams, Jr. for his years of commitment and faithful service to his country, his community, and his family.

HONORING THE LIFE OF SHARON O'NEAL

HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate the life of Sharon O'Neal, a cherished member of our community. Sharon was an extraordinary individual who lived a full and truly beautiful life.

Sharon was a passionate and active member of the Williamsburg community. She was a member of both the Junior Woman's Club and the Woman's Club for over ten years, while serving as club president for two years. Sharon was also a part of the Jamestown High School Parent Teacher Association (PTA) where she served as president for two years. When she was not leading the PTA or Woman's Club, Sharon loved to watch NASCAR, go camping, spend time at the beach, and above all else, be around her loving family.

Sharon's smile coupled with her warm personality made everyone she met feel as if they

had known her for years. Her kindness touched everyone, and she leaves behind a legacy full of compassion and love. Sharon is survived by her devoted husband, Michael O'Neal; her mother, Julie Northway; her children, Jeffrey O'Neal (Abby), Stacey Hughes (John), and Sean O'Neal (Kimberlee); her cherished grandchildren, Kendal, William, Corbin, Sadie, Hazel, Bodhi, Koa, and Lucy; and her brother, Michael Northway (Michelle).

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in celebrating Sharon's incredible life. Our community is eternally grateful for everything she has done.

RECOGNIZING THE PATRIOTISM OF GERALD CULBERTSON

HON. JOHN JOYCE

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Gerald Culbertson of Newburg, Franklin County, for his remarkable public display of patriotism, love of country, and support for Veterans.

In celebration of America's 250th anniversary, Gerald created what he believes to be one of the largest painted American flags in the country. The flag spans 190,000 square feet across a hillside along Burnt Mill Road.

Employed at Letterkenny Army Depot, Gerald said that his late father Wayne Culbertson was a primary source of inspiration for the project. Gerald stated, "My father was always patriotic. He loved the Fourth of July, and I wanted to do something special."

To complete the project, Gerald used more than 415 gallons of paint. He relied exclusively on hand measurements, foregoing GPS equipment, lasers, and computerized guidance. The flag's stripes are 23 feet wide, and the stars are 18 feet in length.

After nearly three months of field preparation and maintenance, Gerald devoted nearly four and a half days to painting the field. He received assistance from several family members.

Gerald was hopeful that President Trump would have an opportunity to view the flag as he flew to Carlisle for the Pennsylvania Defense and Innovation Summit.

On behalf of constituents throughout Franklin County and the entire 13th Congressional District, I congratulate Gerald on the fulfillment of his vision for the project and thank him for becoming a source of inspiration in his own right.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ILHAN OMAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

Mr. OMAR. Mr. Speaker, had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 250, and YEA on Roll Call No. 251.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY
OF THE HONORABLE RUSSELL
THOMAS, JR., FORMER MAYOR
OF AMERICUS, GEORGIA

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart, but with profound gratitude, to honor the life and legacy of one of Southwest Georgia's most devoted public servants, the Honorable Russell Thomas, Jr., former Mayor of Americus, Georgia, who departed this life on Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at the age of 91. A memorial service celebrating his extraordinary life will be held on Tuesday, July 21, 2026, at Americus First Methodist Church, with Reverend Tom Dowdy and Reverend Daryl Brown officiating.

Russell Thomas, Jr. was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 22, 1934, to Dr. Russell Thomas and Margaret Camp Thomas. In 1939, the family returned to Dr. Thomas's hometown of Americus, and from that day forward, Russell Thomas and Americus, Georgia belonged to one another. He graduated from Americus High School in 1952, earned a degree in Agricultural Management from Auburn University, where he was a member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity, and completed his military service as a medic in the United States Army Reserve.

Mayor Thomas built his career in agriculture and forestry, owning Thomas Farms, Inc. with his family and founding or co-owning Americus Creosote Company, T&T Logging, and Georgia Forest Products. But to Russell Thomas, the land was never merely a business. Long before conservation of the longleaf pine ecosystem became a national cause, he was protecting the native longleaf stands at Thomas Farms, quietly practicing the belief that productive timber management and wildlife conservation should go hand in hand. He was a steward in the oldest and truest sense of the word—a man who understood that we do not really own the land; we hold it in trust for our children.

The people of Americus first elected Russell Thomas, Jr. as their Mayor in November 1979, and he served from 1980 to 1988. They called him back in 1993, and he served again from 1994 to 2001—fifteen years in all of steady, visionary, and selfless leadership. In his first term, he worked with the City Council to confront substandard housing and expand housing opportunity. He would later join with Millard Fuller and Habitat for Humanity on the Sumter County Initiative, an audacious campaign to eliminate substandard housing in Americus and Sumter County—a partnership that helped make our corner of Georgia a beacon to the world for what neighbors can accomplish when they take up hammers and hope together.

Mayor Thomas may be best remembered for leading the multi-year effort to restore the historic Windsor Hotel. When many said the grand old landmark could not be saved, Russell Thomas simply refused to give up—and today the Windsor stands as the crown jewel of downtown Americus, a monument in brick and mortar to one man's stubborn faith in his hometown. He was likewise instrumental in the restoration of the Rylander Theatre, estab-

lishing it as the center of the performing arts in Americus, for which he received the Lifetime Friend of the Rylander Award in 2016. Under his leadership, in 2000, Americus was designated one of the first ten Georgia Cities of Excellence. In 1994, in recognition of his public service, the City of Americus named its public safety building the Russell Thomas, Jr. Public Safety Building—an honor rarely bestowed upon the living and richly deserved.

His service extended far beyond City Hall. He served on the Americus Board of Education from 1972 to 1980; as chairman of the Sumter County Board of Tax Assessors from 1976 to 1980; on the board of directors of The Charles L. Mix Memorial Fund, including more than twenty years as its chairman; on the South Georgia Technical College Foundation Board of Trustees; and on the governing board of the Rosalynn Carter Institute at Georgia Southwestern State University. Elected to the Board of Directors of Citizens Bank of Americus in 1985, he served as Chairman of the Board from 1985 to 1999—a period in which the bank was rated the number one community bank in Georgia—and remained on the board until 2025, serving his community's financial wellbeing across five decades.

Mr. Speaker, the record of offices held, and buildings restored tells us what Russell Thomas did. But it does not tell us who he was. Who he was could be found in his office at the back of the old Americus Hardware Store—another of his renovations—where, long past the age when most men retire, friends and neighbors stopped by daily to talk politics, business, and the affairs of the town he loved. Who he was could be found in his backyard, where this former mayor and bank chairman raised tomatoes and waged a good-natured annual contest with the backyard animals to see who could reach the ripe ones first. And who he was could be found riding the dirt backroads of Thomas Farms in his old Tahoe, with his faithful dog Barnabas at his side.

It is said that throughout his life, and in its most difficult times, Russell found solace and peace driving those backroads. And Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to sit with that image for a moment. Here was a man who buried a beloved wife, Andrea, after forty-five years of marriage; a man who bore the deepest grief a parent can know in the loss of his son, Russell, III; a man who carried the weight of a city on his shoulders for fifteen years. And when the sorrows came—as they come to every life—he did not grow bitter, and he did not withdraw from the people. He drove out to the land, under the longleaf pines he had protected, with his dog beside him, and he made his peace—and then he came back to his beloved Americus, and went back to work, and kept on serving. That quiet resilience, that faithfulness that outlasted heartbreak, is the truest measure of the man, and it is the inheritance he leaves to all of us who remain.

Russell Thomas, Jr. was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Andrea Patterson Thomas; his son, Russell Thomas, III; his parents, Dr. Russell Thomas and Margaret Camp Thomas; his sister, Margaret T. Sullivan; and his brothers, Frank Gordon Thomas and John Laurence Thomas. He leaves to cherish his memory his children, Mary Frances "Mimi" Thomas, Anne Camp Thomas, Beth Thomas Cheek (James), and John Braxton Thomas; his daughter-in-law, Angie Ballard Thomas;

eight grandchildren: ten great-grandchildren; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, stepchildren, extended family, and friends who loved him dearly.

Mr. Speaker, the Scriptures teach us in Matthew 25:21, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Russell Thomas, Jr. was faithful—faithful to his family, faithful to his land, faithful to his hometown, and faithful to the God he served. On behalf of my wife, Vivian and the more than 765,000 residents of Georgia's 2nd Congressional District, I extend my deepest condolences to the Thomas family, and I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life, the legacy, and the extraordinary public service of the Honorable Russell Thomas, Jr.—Mayor, steward, builder, and friend—a good and faithful servant who has entered into the joy of his Lord.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE
OF ELLEN MARIE IKE

HON. JOSEPH D. MORELLE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

Mr. MORELLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the life and service of Ellen Marie Ike—more commonly known on Capitol Hill as Ms. Ellen—a Lead Teacher at the House of Representatives Child Care Center, who tragically passed away on June 13, 2026, at the age of 61.

For nearly a decade, Ms. Ellen cared for children from across the Capitol Hill community. Members and staff left their sons and daughters with her in the morning and went to work on the people's business, secure in the knowledge that their children were safe and loved. She returned that trust every day and was recognized repeatedly for the excellence of her service.

A native of Hartford, Connecticut, Ms. Ellen earned a scholarship to Livingstone College in North Carolina, where she sang in the Concert Choir and joined the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Her career began in retail, but her years teaching Sunday school made clear that early childhood education was her calling. After operating her own home-based daycare and teaching at other schools across the Washington metropolitan area, she joined the House Child Care Center in 2018, where she remained until her death.

An early childhood teacher shapes a person at the age when shaping matters most. Ms. Ellen spent the last nine years of her life doing that work in the shadow of the Capitol, for the families of the people who serve here—much of it through a serious illness she rarely let her classroom see. Hundreds of children learned their letters, self-worth, and what it means to be a friend from a teacher who gave them her best while fighting for her own health.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life of Ellen Marie Ike, and in extending our condolences to her family and to her colleagues at the House Child Care Center, who carry on her work.