

wore during the winter months. They fought in the American Indian Wars, rode into Cuba alongside Theodore Roosevelt and the Rough Riders at the start of the Spanish-American War, and soon after served in the Philippine-American War. These regiments also played a pivotal role overseas in the World Wars, as more than 200,000 African Americans served in World War I and more than 1,000,000 African Americans served in World War II.

In addition to their service in the United States Army, the Buffalo Soldiers were among the first park rangers assigned to preserve and protect public lands after the creation of the National Parks Service. While defending parks from fires, poaching, and littering, the Buffalo Soldiers also helped build campsites, roads, and trails. They are credited with creating the first marked nature trail and building the first museum in a national park.

On July 26, 1948, President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981 mandating the desegregation of the United States military. However, the executive order was not enforced until the Korean War in 1951, when Buffalo Soldier regiments were dissolved and soldiers were reassigned to integrated units. Over the course of 85 years, 40,000 Buffalo Soldiers selflessly served our country in a variety of peacetime and combat roles. The highest military distinction of the Congressional Medal of Honor has been awarded to 23 members of the Buffalo Soldiers.

As we honor the 250th anniversary of the founding of our country, I urge my colleagues to pass H.R. 1437, the Buffalo Soldiers Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2025, to award the Congressional Gold Medal to the Buffalo Soldier regiments in recognition of their vital service to the United States. For decades, the Buffalo Soldiers fought in conflicts abroad all while battling civil rights injustices at home. For their courage, perseverance, and patriotism, the Buffalo Soldiers are worthy of the highest praise.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and all my distinguished colleagues join me in honoring the historic legacy and significant contributions of the Buffalo Soldiers on the notable occasion of the 160th anniversary of their formation.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF
SERGEANT J.J. DE LA CERDA

HON. VICENTE GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 30, 2026

Mr. VICENTE GONZALEZ of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the admirable career and dedicated service of Sergeant J.J. De La Cerda, Director of the Nueces County Veterans Services.

Sergeant De La Cerda has devoted his life to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. He is a proud veteran of the United States Marine Corps, serving honorably from 2001 to 2005 with the 1st Marine Division, 2nd Battalion, 11th Marines, and deployed twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Throughout his military career, Sergeant De La Cerda distinguished himself through exemplary leadership and courage. In recognition of his service, he earned numerous honors, including the Iraq Campaign Medal with two Bronze Campaign Stars, the Navy and Marine

Corps Achievement Medal with a Gold Star, and the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon with Bronze Star.

Since his honorable discharge in 2005, Sergeant De La Cerda has continued his lifelong dedication to veterans through a distinguished career in public service. He began by overseeing State Veterans Cemeteries in Mission and Corpus Christi, Texas, and now serves as the Director of Nueces County Veterans Services, where he works to ensure veterans and their families receive the recognition and benefits, they deserve. For his tireless work, he has been awarded the Texas Veterans Commission Top Performer Award and the Corpus Christi Mayor's Committee for Veterans Affairs Veteran Advocate of the Year Award.

Sergeant De La Cerda has made a lasting impact on the lives of countless veterans across South Texas. From assisting veterans with federal benefits claims to ensuring our Nation's heroes receive dignified final honors: he has exemplified the highest ideals of public service.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Texas's 34th Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Sergeant De La Cerda for his courage, integrity, and the personal sacrifices he made in devotion to our community. He is a source of pride and inspiration for all South Texans, and I am honored to recognize his contributions.

HONORING JOE NEVES ON HIS
RETIREMENT

HON. VINCE FONG

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 30, 2026

Mr. FONG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, along with my colleague Representative VALADAO, to honor Joe Neves as he retires from the Kings County Board of Supervisors after an honorable 32 years of service. As the longest-serving seated board member in California history, Mr. Neves has shown a long-standing commitment to service in our community.

If there is one defining characteristic of Mr. Neves' tenure, it is this: true leadership is rooted in common sense, a deep connection to the community, and an unwavering commitment to putting hardworking families first.

Throughout his time on the Board, Mr. Neves played a pivotal role in advancing energy projects that created new sources of revenue for local landowners and schools while helping power regional operations. He was also a major force behind the development of solar energy zones on fallowed, water deprived farmland, repurposing unused land into productive assets that support both the local economy and California's energy future.

Long hailed as a community champion, Mr. Neves has dedicated himself to finding middle ground, consistently working to keep administrative operations running smoothly. This dedication is evident in the work that the Kings County Board of Supervisors has accomplished during Mr. Neves' three decades as board member. This includes boosting state and federal investment into the County's community and educational hubs, such as a \$13 million investment in the Hanford and Lemoore public library branches.

His commitment to agriculture and public service has also earned him numerous honors

throughout his career. Last year, Mr. Neves was recognized as Ag Supporter of the Year for his steadfast advocacy on behalf of the Kings County agricultural community. He has also been named Lemoore Citizen of the Year and received the Tachi Tribe Award, reflecting the deep personal relationships and broad respect he has earned across the county.

Mr. Speaker, please join Representative VALADAO and me in congratulating Joe Neves on 32 years of dedicated service on the Kings County Board of Supervisors and wishing him a happy and healthy retirement.

HONORING THE LIFE OF U.S.
ARMY VETERAN RALPH CHECCHIO

HON. THOMAS H. KEAN, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 30, 2026

Mr. KEAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of U.S. Army Veteran Ralph Checchio, a life-long Scotch Plains resident, who will be remembered for his service, character, and devotion to country and community.

Ralph Checchio was a proud veteran of the United States Army, having served honorably as a sergeant in the 27th Artillery Division during the Vietnam War, spending time in both Korea and Vietnam before being honorably discharged. In answering our Nation's call, he demonstrated the courage, duty, and sacrifice that define the American servicemember.

At home in Scotch Plains, Ralph Checchio started a successful career as a local business owner and operator of Checchio Paving, leading a family-owned business for over five decades. Active in the community, he served as chair of the Scotch Plains Fourth of July Fireworks Committee, Annual Car Show Committee, chair of the Scotch Plains Construction Board of Appeals, and as a member of Scotch Plains 9/11 Memorial Committee.

Ralph Checchio also devoted his time to fellow veteran causes, through his leadership and stewardship of the Memorial Day Parade Committee, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee, Veteran Banner Program Committee, Memorial Day Concert Committee, and Feed the Veterans Committee.

Furthermore, Ralph Checchio's commitment to his community earned him the Americanism Award from the Scotch Plains UNICO, as well as the Good Scout Award from the Boy Scouts of America.

Ralph Checchio's life reflects the spirit of selfless service, whose strength of character and unwavering patriotism shaped our Nation. His story inspires all of us and serves as a reminder of the enduring values that strengthen our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life of Ralph Checchio and his distinguished military service and civic commitment, while expressing our profound gratitude for his contributions to our state and to our Nation. We extend our deepest condolences to his family.

RECOGNIZING
RICCITELLO'S SUCCESS IN THE
2026 TOUR DE FRANCE

HON. JUAN CISCOMANI

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 30, 2026

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Matthew Riccitello on his success in the 2026 Tour de France.

Matthew Riccitello, who was born and raised in Tucson, Arizona, finished this year's Tour de France with a time of 76 hours, 7 minutes, and 35 seconds.

Riding as pall of the Decathlon CMA CGM team in his first Tour de France, Matthew placed 24th overall out of 184 total cyclists.

At just 24 years old, Matthew has already made a name for himself on the international cycling stage, being recognized as one of America's top Grand Tour prospects.

After building a reputation as part of the Israel-Premier Tech cycling team, he made history with an incredible season in 2025 by finishing fifth overall in the Vuelta a España and receiving the race's white jersey as best young rider.

Matthew has consistently performed well in high-altitude races, winning overall in the 2025 Sibiu Cycling Tour and securing a top placement in the 2024 Tour de Suisse and 2023 UAE Tour.

He has already shown excellence on the world stage and has a long and successful career ahead of him.

Matthew's parents still live in Tucson and travelled to France to watch their son compete, getting to see him finish one of the most challenging races in the world.

I congratulate Matthew. His astonishing accomplishment has made his family, hometown, and country so proud.

I wish him the best of luck in future seasons, and I am cheering him on as he continues pursuing his passion of cycling.

HONORING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDIANA BEACH AMUSEMENT PARK

HON. JAMES R. BAIRD

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 30, 2026

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 100th Anniversary of a longstanding Indiana landmark, the Indiana Beach amusement park.

Founded in 1926, this rollercoaster park was originally named Ideal Beach and has so many remarkable amenities and rides throughout its history.

From classics like the Hoosier Hurricane, Tig'rr Coaster, and Rocky's Rapids, to new rides like Zero Gravity and the Cyclone, Monticello's Indiana Beach has been the place "Where Families Flock for Fun" over 100 years now.

I am so excited to see what the next 100 years brings to this staple of Indiana summer entertainment.

I congratulate them.

RECOGNIZING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF JAMES B. CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL

HON. JILL N. TOKUDA

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 30, 2026

Ms. TOKUDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 75th Anniversary of James B. Castle High School, a special place that has shaped generations of students, families, and our entire Windward community, myself included.

For those of us who are Castle Knights, Castle (KASSO) is not just a school. It is a lifelong bond. No matter the graduating class, no matter the generation, there is an instant connection that comes from sharing the experience of growing up beneath the Pali lands. That Knight pride stays with us long after we leave campus, and it is especially meaningful as we celebrate our alma mater's diamond anniversary.

Castle's strength has always come from the community that surrounds it. It begins in our complex elementary and intermediate schools, where lifelong friendships are first formed and future Knights begin their journey. It grows through the unwavering support of families, neighbors, alumni, and the entire Kāne'ohe community, who have always lifted up Castle and its students. Together, they have created something far greater than a school—they have built a family.

For 75 years, Castle has prepared students not only for college and careers, but for lives of purpose and service. Whether in the classroom, on the stage, in the band room, on the athletic field, or through partnerships with the University of Hawaii, generations of students have discovered their talents, built their confidence, and learned the value of working hard and giving back.

On a personal note, my husband Kyle and I are proud that our sons have followed generations of our families in attending Castle High School. I know I would not be the person I am today had it not been for the teachers, faculty, and school community that embraced and guided me. And as I now watch my sons chart their own course through the same hallways and classrooms as we did, it brings me joy to know our sons have become proud Knights.

I offer mahalo to the teachers, staff, administrators, coaches, volunteers, students, families, and alumni who have made these 75 years possible. I thank them for believing in generations of young people and for making Castle a place where every student knows they belong.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating James B. Castle High School on its 75th Anniversary and wishing the Castle Knights many more years of excellence, pride, and community.

RECOGNIZING GORAN RANNEFORS UPON HIS RETIREMENT

HON. JUDY CHU

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 30, 2026

Ms. CHU. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the contributions to the Nation of Goran

Rannefors, a senior executive at Education First (EF), upon his retirement. I proudly represent the EF Academy in Pasadena, a high school that brings students from more than 30 countries to California's 28th District and has taken a leading role in helping our communities recover from the Eaton Fire.

Throughout his 33 years of service with EF, Mr. Rannefors has created opportunities for what is estimated to be over a million students worldwide to travel, participate in cultural exchange programs, and learn English. Mr. Rannefors has served as a diplomat and champion to create and modernize opportunities for language learning and immersive exchange opportunities in the United States and around the world. In addition to his work in the private sector, he founded the Kids First Foundation, a nonprofit organization which has provided tens of thousands of children with vital resources for education, recreation, and life-saving access to food and emergency services. Before joining EF, Mr. Rannefors served as the Swedish Trade Commissioner to North America for nearly a decade.

Mr. Rannefors retires after having truly made a difference by opening the world through education and creating global families who will forever be impacted by his legacy. On behalf of this Congress and the people of the United States, I would like to thank and congratulate Mr. Rannefors, as well as his family and colleagues, for his dedication and accomplishments to promote a more connected, peaceful, and prosperous United States.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO PACE COOPER

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 30, 2026

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the substantial public service of my friend Pace Cooper, who is stepping down from the Board of the Memphis and Shelby County Airport Authority after 14 years of service.

Pace, the President and CEO of Cooper Hotels, a major hospitality development and management company, has been a pivotal figure in improvements to my city of Memphis. Pace has served as president or chairman of various organizations on both local and international levels. He was chairman of the Memphis and Shelby County Airport Authority from 2015 to 2022 and served on the board since 2012. During his leadership, the airport, known as MEM, increased the number of non-stop flights, transformed the passenger experience with a new concourse and positioned the airport for long-term success. As the former Ranking Member of the Aviation Subcommittee of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I have been a staunch supporter of our airport, sending millions of dollars for its improvement, knowing it would be well spent. In addition to his airport activities, Pace has served on the University of Memphis Board of Visitors and serves on the University Foundation Board of Trustees. He is a minority partner in our beloved Memphis Grizzlies of the NBA.

A graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Business School, Pace has been a national business leader and has been instrumental in transforming iconic hotels around