

FLORIDA PIZZA DESTINATION

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, August 10, 2026

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize something that brings people together across every generation, every background, and every community—pizza. Before I speak about Florida, I want to acknowledge the communities that have built America's remarkable pizza heritage. Places like New York, New Haven, Chicago, Detroit, Old Forge, and many others have shaped the history of pizza in the United States. Their traditions are woven into our Nation's culinary identity and deserve to be celebrated.

Florida's story, however, is different. Our state is not seeking to replace these legendary pizza destinations or claim their rich history. Instead, Florida has become something uniquely American—a place where many of our Nation's greatest pizza traditions come together. From Pensacola to Key West, Jacksonville to Tampa Bay, Orlando, Miami, and communities throughout the Sunshine State, talented pizza makers are serving extraordinary New York-style pizza, New Haven apizza, Neapolitan, Detroit-style, Sicilian, Roman, Grandma pies, bar pies, and countless other regional favorites. Many of these artisans trained in America's historic pizza cities before bringing their expertise to Florida. Others have immigrated from Italy and around the world, enriching our state's culinary landscape. Still others are homegrown entrepreneurs who have developed their own distinctive approaches, earning national and international recognition for their craftsmanship. Together, they have created one of the most diverse pizza cultures anywhere in the country.

Florida is also one of the world's premier travel destinations. Every year, millions of visitors come to our state to enjoy our beautiful beaches, world-class attractions, outdoor recreation, vibrant downtowns, and welcoming communities. Increasingly, they are also discovering Florida's outstanding independent pizzerias. These family-owned businesses are more than restaurants. They are small businesses that create jobs, strengthen neighborhoods, support local charities, and contribute to the economic vitality of communities across our state. Congress has previously recognized the cultural significance of regional pizza traditions. In 2024, our colleague, Representative ROSA DELAURO, proudly celebrated New Haven's extraordinary pizza heritage on the House floor. Today, I rise to celebrate a different but complementary story. Florida is not one pizza style. Florida is where many of America's great pizza traditions can be experienced together. It is where innovation meets tradition, where entrepreneurs continue to raise the standard of excellence, and where residents and visitors alike can experience an incredible diversity of flavors, techniques, and cultures. I believe it is appropriate to recognize the State of Florida as "A Pizza Destination." This recognition honors the thousands of independent pizzeria owners, pizza makers, employees, and families whose hard work has helped make Florida one of the Nation's most exciting culinary destinations. It celebrates craftsmanship, entrepreneurship, tourism, and the small businesses that help define our com-

munities. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Florida's growing reputation as "A Pizza Destination" and in celebrating the people whose passion and dedication continue to make the Sunshine State a place where great pizza—and great American small businesses—can thrive.

**HONORING THE MILITARY ORDER
OF THE PURPLE HEART, CHAPTER
711, IN RECOGNITION OF
PURPLE HEART DAY**

HON. SUSIE LEE

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, August 10, 2026

Ms. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Chapter 711, and to honor all Purple Heart recipients in southern Nevada as we observe Purple Heart Day.

Purple Heart Day provides our nation with an opportunity to recognize the extraordinary courage and sacrifice of the men and women who were wounded or killed while serving in defense of the United States. The Purple Heart is one of our nation's oldest and most revered military decorations, representing a legacy of selfless service, resilience, and unwavering devotion to duty.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Chapter 711, has long served as a steadfast advocate for combat-wounded veterans and their families throughout southern Nevada. Through its commitment to veterans' outreach, mentorship, community service, and support for fellow Purple Heart recipients, the chapter continues to uphold the values of honor, patriotism, and service that define our nation's military.

The members of Chapter 711 not only carry the visible and invisible wounds of war with dignity, but they also dedicate themselves to ensuring that no veteran is forgotten. Their leadership strengthens our community, inspires future generations, and reminds us of the tremendous cost of the freedoms we enjoy each day.

On Purple Heart Day, we extend our deepest gratitude to every recipient of this distinguished medal. Their sacrifices have safeguarded our nation and preserved the liberties we cherish. We remain forever indebted to these brave Americans and to the families who have stood beside them through every challenge.

It is my distinct honor to recognize the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Chapter 711, for its continued service to our veterans and our community. On behalf of Nevada's 3rd Congressional District and a grateful nation, I thank them for their sacrifice, their leadership, and their enduring commitment to those who have borne the battle.

**HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY
OF LYNN BARTELS**

HON. DIANA DeGETTE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, August 10, 2026

Ms. DeGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Lynn Bartels, a

dear friend and one of Colorado's most respected and influential journalists.

For more than two decades, Lynn chronicled the people, events, and decisions that shaped our state. She possessed an insatiable curiosity, a relentless pursuit of the truth, and an unmatched ability to connect with people from every walk of life.

Whether covering governors, senators, legislators, or local officials, she approached every story with tenacity, fairness, and integrity. She held public officials accountable without losing sight of their humanity. Colleagues and elected leaders alike admired her encyclopedic knowledge of Colorado politics, her sharp memory, and her remarkable network of sources. Yet beyond her professional accomplishments, it was her authenticity, warmth, and genuine interest in people that earned her widespread admiration and trust.

What set Lynn apart was her unwavering commitment to fairness. She did not play favorites, nor did she allow partisanship to shape her reporting. Democrats, Republicans, and Independents knew they would receive the same honest treatment from Lynn. Even those who found themselves the subject of a difficult story respected her because they knew she was guided by a steadfast commitment to the facts and to the public she served.

Lynn's influence extended far beyond the newsroom. After her distinguished career in journalism, she continued serving Colorado in state government, bringing the same intelligence, energy, humor, and dedication that had defined her reporting. She remained a trusted colleague, mentor, and friend to countless individuals across the political spectrum. Her unique ability to build relationships, foster understanding, and communicate complex issues made her an indispensable part of Colorado's civic life.

As we remember Lynn Bartels, we celebrate not only an exceptional journalist but also an exceptional friend and mentor who will be deeply missed. Her infectious personality, quick wit, compassion, and passion for public service touched generations of Coloradans. She leaves behind a legacy of excellence, fairness, and humanity that will continue to inspire those who follow in her footsteps. Although Lynn is no longer with us, her impact endures in the stories she told, the people she influenced, the leaders she held accountable, and the stronger, better-informed Colorado she helped build.

I extend my heartfelt condolences to Lynn's family, friends, and all who had the privilege of knowing her. May she rest in peace.

**REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF
MARK SILBERT**

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, August 10, 2026

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Mark Silbert, a devoted husband, father, grandfather, engineer, and community leader whose life was defined by intellect, integrity, curiosity, and an unwavering commitment to those around him.

Mark's pursuit of knowledge and excellence led him to earn advanced degrees in Physical

Oceanography and Engineering before beginning a distinguished career with ExxonMobil. As a Project Manager, he played a key role in overseeing the design and construction of offshore platforms, earning the respect of his colleagues through his expertise, leadership, and dedication. After retiring in 2006, Mark and his beloved wife, Rosa, made Santa Fe their home, where he continued to be an active and valued member of his community.

Throughout his life, Mark embraced every opportunity to learn, compete, and connect with others. A talented athlete, he captained New York University's swim team and enjoyed a lifelong passion for sports, including tennis, fly fishing, and golf. His love of golf led him to serve as Chairman of the Golf Committee, where his commitment and enthusiasm left a lasting impression and the game became a cherished bond he shared with his sons, David and Glenn, and his grandson, Jack.

A proud Brooklyn native, Mark shared 58 beautiful years of marriage with Rosa, his childhood sweetheart. Together, they built a life filled with love, adventure, and cherished memories while living abroad and exploring the world. Above all, Mark's greatest joy was his family, and he was a devoted father and proud grandfather of six.

Mark's legacy of excellence, generosity, and love will continue to inspire all who knew him. It is my honor to recognize his remarkable life and extend my deepest condolences to Rosa, his family, and all who mourn his passing.

HONORING ABBY LAPOLE

HON. EMILIA STRONG SYKES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, August 10, 2026

Mrs. SYKES. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Abby LaPole of Massillon as Ohio's 13th Congressional District's Champion of the Week for July 27th after being awarded Stark County Girls Athlete of the Year.

Abby earned this honor following a historic career at Jackson High School. At this year's Ohio High School Athletic Association's Track and Field Championships, Abby captured her third consecutive state title in girls' seated shot put with a final-attempt throw of 21 feet, 7.5 inches. She leaves high school as a three-time state champion and the all-time Stark County record holder in the event, with her top throw of 23 feet, 5.75 inches this season cementing her place among the best athletes in Stark County history.

A dedicated student-athlete, Abby has spent years putting in the work to excel in competition while representing Jackson, Massillon, Stark County, and Ohio's 13th Congressional District with pride. Through her achievements, Abby has shown the strength of adaptive athletics and the opportunities available to athletes who pursue their goals at the highest levels of competition.

She embodies why our district is proudly known as the "Birthplace of Champions."

I congratulate Abby on this well-deserved recognition and celebrate all she has accomplished.

HONORING MARCUS BOWERS

HON. MICHAEL GUEST

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, August 10, 2026

Mr. GUEST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Marcus Bowers. For more than 45 years, Marcus Bowers has been dedicated to serving his community through sharing small town stories, breaking news, and everyday happenings across Rankin County. Alongside his family, he became owner of the Rankin County News on October 6, 1980, serving as publisher, editor, and advertising manager while leading one of Mississippi's most respected community newspapers.

The Rankin County News holds a unique place in Mississippi history as the oldest continuously published newspaper in the state. During the Civil War, when newsprint became scarce, the newspaper continued publishing by printing editions on the back of wallpaper—an enduring symbol of its commitment to keeping citizens informed. In its early years, the paper's circulation extended from Meridian to Vicksburg, serving readers across a large portion of central Mississippi.

Under Marcus's leadership, the newspaper embraced a simple philosophy: "Report the news, don't make the news." For more than 45 years, the Rankin County News has documented the history, achievements, challenges, and growth of Rankin County while preserving the stories that define its communities. As Marcus wrote upon announcing the sale of the newspaper, "A newspaper is a protector for the public." Mucus has also been deeply involved in civic service. He served as President of the Mississippi Press Association, representing newspapers across the state, and has dedicated countless hours to community organizations and public service, including serving 17 years as a Certified Reserve Police Officer with the Brandon Police Department.

Marcus Bowers has spent a lifetime preserving the history of Rankin County while helping to shape its future. I am thankful for the opportunity to honor his service to Rankin County.

RECOGNIZING BRIGGS & STRATTON AND THE WORKERS OF POPLAR BLUFF

HON. JASON SMITH

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, August 10, 2026

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a truly extraordinary achievement by one of Missouri's most dedicated employers—Briggs & Stratton—and to recognize the men and women of Poplar Bluff, Missouri, whose skill, dedication, and hard work have made this moment possible.

This past June, the Briggs & Stratton facility in Poplar Bluff achieved a milestone that few manufacturers in American history can claim: the production of its 100 millionth engine. These are the very engines that power lawnmowers and outdoor equipment that families and workers across our nation rely on every single day.

Briggs & Stratton is a pillar of the Poplar Bluff community. For nearly four decades, through economic cycles, industry disruptions, and moments of national uncertainty, Briggs & Stratton chose to stay in Poplar Bluff to invest in this community, to employ its residents, and to build something lasting here in the heart of Missouri.

The workers of this facility are the true authors of this milestone, with many of them giving decades of their lives to this plant. Look no further than brothers Jerry and Billy Young, who have both dedicated over 30 years of service to this facility. They, alongside so many others who have followed in the footsteps of a parent or relative on these same lines, are the definition of the American worker: skilled, loyal, and proud. The economic impact of this facility on Poplar Bluff and Butler County has been profound. For 37 years, Briggs & Stratton has provided family-sustaining wages, supported local suppliers and businesses, contributed to the tax base that funds schools and infrastructure, and invested in the community that has been its home. This is what a company that believes in the American worker and the American community looks like.

American manufacturing is alive, strong, and flourishing in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Briggs & Stratton, its leadership, and above all the dedicated workforce of the Poplar Bluff facility on this remarkable achievement.

REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF WILLIAM "WALLACE" VERNON

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, August 10, 2026

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of William "Wallace" Vernon, a devoted husband, father, grandfather, businessman, and community leader whose life exemplified faith, integrity, and selfless service.

Born in Snyder, Texas, Wallace developed the values of hard work, humility, and leadership that guided him throughout his life. After earning his degree from Texas Tech University, he became a Certified Public Accountant and built a distinguished career with Lott, Vernon & Company, retiring as a respected partner in 2006. Even in retirement, he remained active as a business owner, investor, and mentor.

Wallace's greatest passion was serving others. A faithful member of First Baptist Church of Killeen, he devoted decades of leadership to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Texas, helping expand opportunities for thousands of young people. In recognition of his extraordinary commitment, he received the Boys & Girls Clubs of America's Champion of Youth Award in 2011. His service also extended to numerous civic organizations, medical mission trips, and disaster relief efforts, reflecting his lifelong dedication to strengthening his community.

Together with his beloved wife of 62 years, Emmadell, Wallace built a home rooted in faith, generosity, and service. He treasured his family and found great joy in encouraging his children and grandchildren, always leading by