

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 2, 2026

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the United States of America's 250th anniversary.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, our founding fathers signed the Declaration of Independence, announcing our sovereignty as a Nation and proclaiming the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. While our country has often failed to live up to these ideals, through the work of many courageous Americans, we have made slow but steadfast progress toward our shared goal of a country that truly embodies liberty and justice for all.

Across our fifty states and many diverse communities, our country has countless proud traditions and accomplishments. For myself, as a high-risk youth who grew up in Jefferson County, Colorado, I know personally what is possible in this country when we invest in people and give them the resources they need to succeed. As a lifelong Coloradan, I was raised with a deep appreciation for our outdoor spaces and public lands. Our country's people and places are what make the United States so special. As we celebrate this momentous occasion, I am struck by the ingenuity, generosity, resilience, and bravery of my fellow citizens, both past and present, who have helped shape what it means to be an American and encourage our country to strive for the better angels of our nature.

On behalf of the people of Colorado's 7th Congressional District, I celebrate our country's 250th anniversary. With an eye to how we can learn from our past, I am excited and hopeful as we move forward into a new period in our country's history.

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN HERO AT&T DALLAS VOLUNTEERS

HON. BETH VAN DUYNÉ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 2, 2026

Ms. VAN DUYNÉ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, AT&T Dallas Volunteers. In a remarkable display of teamwork and community spirit, 633 AT&T employees from across North Texas came together at the AT&T Discovery District in Dallas to break not one, but two Guinness World Records: the Most Backpacks Packed in an Hour and the Most People Simultaneously Stuffing Backpacks.

Their collective efforts resulted in over 10,000 backpacks filled with essential school supplies, from pens and notebooks to headphones, and even laptops for qualifying families.

The event showcased great volunteerism, as team members from across the region united to make a tangible impact. I thank everyone who dedicated their time to making a real difference in our community.

HONORING MOUNT PILGRIM BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. CLEO FIELDS

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 2, 2026

Mr. FIELDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a historic church in my District, Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, as it celebrates more than 130 years of faith, fellowship, and service to the people of East Baton Rouge Parish.

Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church was founded in 1893, when a group of devout Christians purchased an acre of land in order to establish a place to worship. Brothers Sam Capp and William Taylor served as spokesmen for the group that eventually constructed a small wooden frame building at the site of the present church.

The first pastor was Reverend Harding Jackson, who served until his death in 1910. Reverend Pete Netter led the congregation until 1914, when Reverend J.M. Thomas assumed the pastorate. Reverend R.W. Ball became the fourth pastor in 1920.

The church was remodeled in 1924. It burned in December of 1926 and was rebuilt in 1927. A new church was constructed in 1951 under the leadership of Reverend Ball. After becoming sick, Reverend Ball was unable to serve, and the assistant pastor, Reverend Eddie M. White, became the fifth pastor of Mount Pilgrim.

Reverend White had a concern for young people and focused on programs that promoted spiritual growth and physical well-being. As the church membership and ministry grew, a new sanctuary, an educational center, a kitchen and fellowship hall, and a Pastor's Study were added. Reverend White passed away in 1974, and Reverend Joseph Richard was appointed as pastor.

Reverend Richard served until 1979, when Reverend C.J. Hickman was called to serve as interim pastor for approximately fourteen months. Reverend Frederick Powell then served as pastor from 1980 to 1982. Upon his resignation, Reverend C.J. Hickman served as interim pastor once again, until Reverend Jesse B. Bilberry, Jr., was elected by the congregation on January 16, 1984, to become the eighth pastor. He was both ordained to preach and installed by the Fourth District Missionary Baptist Association as pastor of Mount Pilgrim on February 19, 1984.

Dr. Ronnie O. Blake was elected the ninth pastor of Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church on March 19, 2019, and was installed by the Fourth District Missionary Baptist Association as pastor of Mount Pilgrim in April 2019. Pas-

tor Blake has also taught Christian Education courses at various Fourth District Missionary Baptist Association and Louisiana Missionary Baptist State Convention events. The Reverend Dr. Chaney was installed on November 22, 2025.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church for more than a century of faithful service, and in wishing its pastor and congregation continued blessings in the years to come.

HONORING MINNESOTA STATE SENATOR SANDY PAPPAS

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 2, 2026

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the distinguished career of Minnesota State Senator Sandy Pappas on the occasion of her retirement after 42 years of public service in the Minnesota Legislature. First elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in 1984 and to the Minnesota Senate in 1990, Senator Pappas has dedicated more than four decades to serving the people of Minnesota, especially the residents of her district in Saint Paul.

During her 42 years of legislative service, Senator Pappas has made lasting contributions on issues including education, health care, workers' rights, women's economic security, public safety, transportation, pensions, and economic and social equity. She has chaired the Senate Capital Investment Committee, the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement, the Senate State and Local Government Committee, the Senate Higher Education Committee, and the Senate Education Committee. From 2013 to 2016, she served as President of the Minnesota Senate, a testament to the trust placed in her by her colleagues.

The Senator's legislative accomplishments have touched the lives of so many Minnesotans. She was instrumental in advancing the Minnesota DREAM Act, the Women's Economic Security Act, statewide Earned Sick and Safe Time, and the creation of the Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board. She championed legislation to eliminate the statute of limitations for sexual assault and helped secure Minnesota's ban on child marriage. As a longtime leader on pensions, she helped strengthen retirement security for public employees.

Senator Pappas has been a tireless champion for the city of Saint Paul and even ran for mayor in 1997. She helped secure state funding for projects throughout the city, including the Union Depot, the Minnesota Children's Museum, the Ordway, the Victoria Theater, Pedro Park, the North End Community Center, Reconnect Rondo, the reconstruction of the Third Street/Kellogg Bridge, and Shoreline reinforcements on the Mississippi River, Raspberry Island, Upper Landing and Harriet Island. In 2023, as chair of the Senate Capital

● 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.

Investment Committee and chief author of the legislation, she helped deliver a historic \$2.6 billion capital investment package supporting critical infrastructure for communities across Minnesota.

Beyond her legislative accomplishments, Senator Pappas has devoted considerable time and energy to public policy and community service. In 2011, she co-founded Forward Global Women, a nonprofit organization that convenes and trains women leaders from Middle Eastern and North African countries and the United States to step into public leadership positions and build the next generation of women peacemakers. She also taught public policy at Metropolitan State University for 20 years. She earned her bachelor's degree in public policy from Metropolitan State University and a Master of Public Administration from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government as a Bush Fellow. Throughout her career, Senator Pappas has exemplified a steadfast commitment to public service, human rights, equality, and expanding opportunities for women to lead.

It has been an honor to know and work with Senator Pappas. When I was first elected to the Minnesota House in 1992, Sandy was already a force in the state legislature. Over the years, our paths took us in different directions. I eventually went to Congress, while Sandy continued her work in the Minnesota Senate. But we never stopped working together because we both care deeply about the communities we have the privilege to represent. I had the pleasure of working with her on many projects for Saint Paul that brought together local, state, and federal government, including the historic Union Depot. Her legislative expertise, dedication to Saint Paul, and commitment to public service have made her a trusted partner and friend. She leaves public service having made Saint Paul and Minnesota stronger.

I am grateful for Sandy's friendship and for all she has done for our communities. I wish her, her husband Neal, their three children, and many grandchildren and great grandchildren all the best in this next chapter.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in this well-deserved tribute to Senator Sandy Pappas on the occasion of her retirement after 42 years of distinguished public service in the Minnesota Legislature.

RECOGNIZING JOE A. GONZALEZ
(JAG) FOR HIS PUBLIC SERVICE

HON. VICENTE GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 2, 2026

Mr. VICENTE GONZALEZ of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Nueces County Commissioner Joe A. Gonzalez (JAG) for his decades of public service and contributions to the people of Nueces County.

Commissioner Gonzalez has devoted more than four decades to serving his community and country. His career began in law enforcement and criminal justice, where he served as a Corpus Christi Police Officer, Texas State Parole Officer, and the United States Department of Justice. He later served as Nueces County Justice of the Peace, Precinct 1, Place 1, before becoming Nueces County Commissioner for Precinct No. 2 in 2011.

Throughout his tenure at the county, Gonzalez focused on expanding opportunity and improving quality of life. As Justice of the Peace, he helped establish the Truancy Reduction Alternative Program Solutions, an initiative focused on early intervention, education, and helping young people succeed. He later established the Joe A. Gonzalez (JAG) Education Is Our Freedom GED College Scholarship Program, which has helped thousands of local students pursue higher education.

As a Nueces County Commissioner, Gonzalez worked to improve healthcare access, veterans' services, rural infrastructure, public transportation, education, and community development. He helped establish Veterans Memorial Courtyards in the Agua Dulce, Banquete, and Bishop communities creating permanent places to honor those who served our Nation. He also worked to improve drainage, wastewater systems, and colonia infrastructure, while expanding access to healthcare services in underserved rural communities.

Additionally, Gonzalez served six years in the United States Marine Corps Reserve and twelve years in the United States Air Force Reserve. His dedication to both his country and community reflects a lifetime of commitment to others.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 34th Congressional District of Texas, I congratulate Joe A. Gonzalez (JAG), Nueces County Commissioner, on his remarkable career and thank him for his commitment to the people of Nueces County and South Texas.

RECOGNIZING PHILIP C. SNEED

HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 2, 2026

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Philip C. Sneed for his extraordinary leadership and lasting contributions to the Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities as he retires after nearly 14 years as President and CEO.

Philip Sneed's connection to the Arvada Center spans nearly its entire 50-year history. At 17, he received his first paycheck from the Arvada Center for a role in its inaugural theatre season. After a distinguished career in the arts in both Colorado and California, Philip returned to Arvada to lead the very institution where his artistic journey began—bringing his career full circle.

During his tenure, Philip became the longest-serving leader in the Arvada Center's history. His leadership helped guide the organization through some of its most significant milestones and challenges, including its transition from a City of Arvada entity to an independent nonprofit organization. He also helped the Center endure the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, ensuring that this treasured cultural institution remained strong during a time when communities could not gather in person. Philip has worked to make the Arvada Center a more welcoming and inclusive place, one where all people feel they belong and where the arts can be experienced by everyone in our community.

On behalf of the people of Colorado's 7th Congressional District, it is my honor to recog-

nize Philip C. Sneed and thank him for his contribution to our community.

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN
HERO GRAPEVINE HIGH SCHOOL
BASEBALL TEAM

HON. BETH VAN DUYN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 2, 2026

Ms. VAN DUYN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Grapevine High School Baseball Team. The Grapevine Mustangs Baseball Team clinched their second consecutive state title at the UIL 5A Division II State Championship in Round Rock, Texas. With a 9–5 victory over Humble Kingwood Park High School, the Mustangs became the first UIL 5A team to go back-to-back since 2003.

Throughout the season, the team displayed incredible resilience, teamwork, and sportsmanship representing North Texas well. With the strong leadership of Head Coach Jimmy Webster, Grapevine finished with an impressive 36–3 record and ranked number 1 in the Texas High School Coaches Association Rankings.

The Mustangs' hard-fought championship run is more than just a victory on a field, it is a testament to their dedication and commitment. I congratulate the players, coaches, and families on this unforgettable season. The Grapevine High School Mustangs Baseball Team has given us in Texas-24 something to celebrate.

HONORING NEW HOPE BAPTIST
CHURCH

HON. CLEO FIELDS

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 2, 2026

Mr. FIELDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a distinguished church in my District, New Hope Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, as it approaches eight decades of worship, discipleship, and service to the Eden Park community and the greater Baton Rouge area.

The New Hope Baptist Church, with its seating capacity of two hundred, was organized on North 46th Street on Sunday, September 28, 1947, under the leadership of the late Reverend J.S. Wicks, with approximately fifty members who ventured in faith to make an impact on the community and together secured governmental services and educational resources beneficial to Eden Park. New Hope grew numerically and spiritually with Church Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, evangelistic efforts, and the formation of the Adult Music Ministry, while musicals, culinary endeavors, and trips to beaches garnered funds to meet needs.

Pastor Wicks served as the under-shepherd for twenty-nine years, and then, in the spirit of love, Dr. Leo Daniel Cyrus, Sr., was installed as the church's second pastor on the fourth Sunday, August 22, 1976. The first Children's Choir was formed, Bible study began, the usher ministries increased, and the deaconess ministry was organized.