

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN
HERO DETECTIVE SCOTT HODGINS

HON. BETH VAN DUYNE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 3, 2026

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize our Texas-24 Hometown Hero. Detective Scott Hodgins, who recently retired from years of dedicated service to the Irving Police Department.

Detective Hodgins began as a Patrol Officer before transitioning to a Detective in the Crimes Against Children Unit. In that role, he helped protect the most vulnerable members of society and help bring victims to justice. During his time, he earned a Certificate of Merit Bar, and hosted a podcast called "The Case Reopened", where he examined cold cases with a detective's insight.

I thank Detective Hodgins for his service to the Irving Police Department and helping keep North Texas safe.

CELEBRATING WESLEY UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH

HON. CLEO FIELDS

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 3, 2026

Mr. FIELDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a historic congregation in my District, Wesley United Methodist Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, as it commemorates 160 years of faith, freedom, and service to our community. John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, was deeply troubled by the cruelty of slavery, calling it "the vilest that ever saw the sun," and vowed that no Methodist church would be established in a region that condoned such an inhumane practice. His conviction drew many Black believers to Methodism and its core belief that every person is created equal in the eyes of God.

From those ideals of freedom, equality, and service, Wesley United Methodist Church, originally known as Wesley Chapel, was born. After the Emancipation Proclamation, newly freed African Americans in Baton Rouge sought to establish sacred spaces of their own, and in May 1866, William D. Mann purchased land in Beauregard Town, one of the city's oldest and most historic neighborhoods. With saws and axes in hand, Wesley's founders cut trees, floated logs down the Mississippi River to the Harbor Sawmill, and built the first structure of Wesley Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church. Even before that building rose, the people of Wesley worshipped on the same ground the present structure stands upon, a reminder that the Holy Spirit has made a people to worship God, not a building.

The original church stood strong for more than eighty years through fires, storms, and time itself, and as the congregation flourished, it became Wesley Methodist Church in 1939 and constructed a new sanctuary in 1966 to accommodate its growing membership. The church has been blessed with over fifty ministers and a congregation that includes more than fifty-five members who have each served faithfully for over fifty years. Wesley also holds a unique distinction as the only African Amer-

ican church in Baton Rouge to house a pipe organ, and its stained-glass window, designed for full visibility from top to bottom, serves as the radiant heart of a sanctuary furnished largely by gifts lovingly donated by members.

On Founders' Day this year, the congregation honors the pioneers who built Wesley on a foundation of faith, love, and resilience, a legacy that lives on in every hymn, every prayer, and every act of service that continues to bless the community. It remains inspired by the timeless words of John Wesley, which continue to guide its mission today: Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

Mr. Speaker, Wesley United Methodist Church is led today by Reverend Dr. Jonathan C. Richardson, and I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the church on the occasion of its 160th anniversary, and in wishing its pastor and congregation continued blessings in the years to come.

HONORING THE CAREER OF
MATTHEW SERMON

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 3, 2026

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the distinguished career of Mr. Matthew Sermon, who is retiring today, Thursday, September 3, 2026, after nearly 30 years of stellar federal service.

Mr. Sermon began his extraordinary career as a midshipman at the United States Naval Academy. After graduation from Annapolis, he was commissioned as a Surface Warfare Officer and nuclear engineering officer. During his time at sea, he was deployed to the Middle East during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, accumulating an impeccable record in uniform.

After discharging from active duty, Matt continued his public service with the Navy as a civilian in 2005, focused on revitalizing America's shipbuilding industrial base. He passionately understood that, for the sake of our maritime Nation, the decline of our shipbuilding workforce, infrastructure, and supply chain, which occurred in the wake of the end of the Cold War, needed to be reversed.

In that cause, he has made critical contributions to build and support ships, amphibious, destroyers, and most specially submarines. Specifically, these contributions were made while holding various program manager and leadership roles in the Support Ships, Boats, and Craft Programs the International Fleet Support office, for the Zumwalt Class Destroyer, and for the Columbia Class Submarine program. Within these positions, Mr. Sermon managed billions of dollars in funding and hundreds of personnel, all of which was guided by his commitment to the technological advancement and unilateral preeminence of our Nation's Navy.

Mr. Speaker, Matt Sermon is a household name within Eastern Connecticut's substantial submarine industrial base. Starting in 2019, as Congress increased funding for the undersea fleet, he managed investment in our submarine suppliers, workforce, and shipyards.

Year in and year out, over my 12 years as Chairman and/or Ranking Member of the Seapower and Projection Forces subcommittee, Matt has been a most trusted partner—and leader—in executing Congress' constitutional duty to "provide and maintain a Navy".

Mr. Sermon completes his more than two decades of civil service as the Executive Director for the Director Reporting Portfolio Manager, Submarines, or DRPMI Subs. His work, alongside Vice Admiral Gaucher, is focused on taking the production of submarine tonnage to record high levels. His dedication and service are admirable and deserving of special recognition. As his time in public service draws to a close, I want to personally attest to the fact that tens of thousands of new, young, energetic metal trades workers, designers, and engineers are today enjoying life-changing careers because of Matt's devoted, talented leadership.

I ask that the House join me in celebrating the career of Mr. Matthew Sermon, and in wishing all the best to his family.

HONORING THE LIFE OF JOHN
FRANCIS "JACK" HOUTON

HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 3, 2026

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of John Francis "Jack" Houton—a proud Bostonian, Navy veteran, attorney, longtime public servant, devoted family man, and my friend.

I had the privilege of knowing Jack for many years. We shared Red Sox games, stories about Boston politics, and plenty of conversations about public service. He was part of a generation of Massachusetts public servants who believed deeply in government as a force for good—and who understood that serving others was never about getting credit.

Jack was born and raised in Dorchester, the son of Irish immigrants from County Donegal, Ireland. He became the first in his family to attend college, graduating from Boston College before earning a commission as an officer in the United States Navy. He served six years on active duty and later retired from the Naval Reserve as a Lieutenant Commander.

When his time in uniform ended, his service continued. Jack went on to earn his law degree and build a distinguished career in Massachusetts public life. He served as Special Assistant to Boston Mayor John F. Collins, worked with Boston's arts community, served as Clerk of the Massachusetts House Committee on Rules, and later as an Assistant Attorney General under Robert H. Quinn.

Jack's contribution to his community extended far beyond any job title. Throughout his life, he remained involved in civic affairs, libraries, historic preservation, theater, charitable organizations, and the arts. He was endlessly curious, deeply engaged, and always ready for a conversation about Boston, politics, Ireland, literature, the Red Sox, or the sea.

What I will remember most is the man himself: his warmth, humor, his wisdom, and his friendship. Above all, Jack loved his family. He is survived by his beloved wife, Ellen; his eight

children; fourteen grandchildren; his sister, Roseleen; and a large extended family.

Massachusetts is stronger because of people like Jack Houton—people who spend their lives quietly showing up, serving their communities, and leaving things a little better than they found them.

I extend my deepest condolences to Jack's family and all who loved him. I thank my friend Jack for a life of service, friendship, and purpose.

Fair winds and following seas, my friend.

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN
HERO CLAYTON AND ELLEN
KERSHAW

HON. BETH VAN DUYNE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 3, 2026

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker. I rise to recognize our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Clayton and Ellen Kershaw, who have been named the 2026 University Park Citizens of the Year in recognition of their commitment to serving others and making a lasting impact on their community and beyond.

This award honors University Park residents who enhance the city's quality of life, often through service, generosity, and leadership. Since the launch of Kershaw's Challenge in 2011, the Kershaw's have supported vulnerable and at-risk children in Dallas, Los Angeles, Zambia, and the Dominican Republic by providing hope, resources, and opportunities for a brighter future. Through Kershaw's Challenge, the couple has used their platform to empower communities and create opportunities for children and families in need.

Clayton, a graduate of Highland Park High School and a former pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers, has also been recognized for his humanitarian efforts with the Roberto Clemente Award. Together, Clayton and Ellen continue to inspire others through their dedication to creating meaningful change.

HONORING GREATER KING DAVID
BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. CLEO FIELDS

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 3, 2026

Mr. FIELDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a faithful congregation in my District, Greater King David Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, as it marks more than a century of worship, Christian education, evangelism, and community service.

Greater King David Baptist Church was established in 1922 after a division within New Light Baptist Church. Originally located on Crane Street, the church began with approximately thirty-two members and was led by its founding pastor, Reverend Willie Wheeler. In 1925, the congregation adopted the name King David Baptist Church to distinguish it from another church with the same name. As the congregation grew, a larger church building was completed on Crane Street in 1947, followed by the construction of an educational building.

In 1973, the church began construction of a new facility to accommodate its growing membership and expanding educational programs. The new church on Blount Avenue was completed and consecrated in 1975, at which time the congregation officially adopted the name Greater King David Baptist Church. The church continued to expand its ministries and community outreach, including establishing an Inner-City location on Harry Drive in 1995. Greater King David Baptist Church has maintained a longstanding commitment to worship, Christian education, evangelism, and community service in Baton Rouge.

Greater King David Baptist Church is led today by Reverend Dr. John E. Montgomery.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in commending Greater King David 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 NORTH CAROLINA AG-
RICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL
STATE UNIVERSITY

HON. RICHARD HUDSON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 3, 2026

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the anniversaries of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University's (N.C. A&T) 100th homecoming and the 125th football season for the Aggies.

The Aggies' homecoming is known as "The Greatest Homecoming on Earth." Each fall, tens of thousands of N.C. A&T alumni join students, faculty, and Aggie fans in a weeklong homecoming celebration. The university traces its homecoming tradition to 1926, when Aggies began gathering around football, fellowship, and alumni engagement. The 100th anniversary homecoming celebration includes a parade, an alumni concert, a stepshow, a coronation, a tailgate, and a game against Elon University on October 31, 2026.

The centennial celebration also coincides with the 125th season of Aggie football, which dates to 1901 when N.C. A&T played its first game against Livingstone College. There have been many great moments in the team's history including: 11 Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference championships and undefeated season in 2017. N.C. A&T has also produced 39 NFL players, including one hall of famer and 3 Superbowl champions.

I am proud to support such a talented and historic program. I am inspired by what N.C. A&T accomplished and I cannot wait to see what they will achieve in the next 125 years.

Mr. Speaker, please join me today honoring the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University on its 100th homecoming and 125th football season.

RECOGNIZING REMARKS OF RABBI
DR. ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

HON. JENNIFER A. KIGGANS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 3, 2026

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD remarks submitted at

the request of a Virginia Beach constituent, Rabbi Dr. Israel Zoberman of Temple Lev Tikvah. And are a reflection of his views:

The major celebration of the Jewish Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah (The New Year 5787) and Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement) are enhanced by a probing and provocative volume of the quality of To Be A Jew Today (A New Guide to God, Israel and the Jewish People) New York: Farrar Strause and Giroux. The recent book by Noah Feldman, the Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law as well as chair of the Society of Fellows at Harvard University where he is the founding director of the Julius-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli law.

Feldman raises fundamental and foundational issues that are at the heart of contemporary Jewish identity that all thoughtful and concerned Jews from throughout the wide spectrum of Jewish affiliation and practice along with those on the periphery of active Jewish life, would find both meaningful and purposeful to wrestle with. Additionally, Feldman's profound scholarship is not of the dry type, rather perks intellectual curiosity while appealing in a clarion call to a big tent approach, to pause and reassess core Jewish themes in conversation with one who shys from being authoritative. "In the course of writing this book, I intentionally have not flagged what I think is now in it. My goal in that isn't to make what I write seem obviously true. It's to allow you, the reader, to use your own reaction to gauge and solidify what you think, not what I think. You can certainly read this book by arguing with it. I read a lot of books this way, and it often works for me. If you want, however, you can also read this book not argumentatively but introspectively—the way I wrote it.

Though the book is designed with a lofty and a bit presumptive goal as "A New Guide to God, Israel and the Jewish people," "It does reflect the author's own respect for high academic standing and his heavy stake in reaching out for a Jewish world in much disarray spiritually, socially and politically with the shaking events he mentions of October 7 offering an urgent backdrop as a unifying Jewish factor. Thus it is not happenstance that he refers to the "Guide of the Perplexed" by the recognized giant Jewish thinker of all times, the medieval Moses Maimonides, who reached out to his own perplexed generation confronted and challenged by Greek, Islamic and Pagan influences while attempting to secure and anchor an authentic Jewish response and identity without imposing his own perspective. Yet he aroused the ire of the rabbinic establishment who called for banning his book but might have resulted, surmises Feldman, in the Talmud's burning by the Church in Paris in 1242.

The "New Guide" offered by the author is his own attempt to follow on the Maimonidean model with reaching to his own perplexed times in a way that clarifies without setting himself up as the supreme arbiter of such an imposing agenda of discourse. "One initial aim of this book is to chart a map of contemporary Jewish lives and ideas, a map the reader can use not to identify bad Jews but to explore and appreciate the many different ways Jews can be and think and experience. It can be used as a field guide to Jewish people and ideas as they exist today, and as they are being transformed for the future."

Feldman's embracing and inclusive approach focuses on the notion that a "bad Jew" which is common, including the author, to how Jews feel in relation to their demanding heritage regulating Jewish conduct, is in fact alien to Judaism. Given the trying circumstances of the historical Jewish experience, including forced mass conversion of