2014, became president of the American Soybean Association, carrying the priorities of Iowa's farmers on trade missions around the world. He co-founded Solutions from the Land and led the Iowa Conservative Energy Forum, championing conservation and homegrown energy. His service extended beyond agriculture as well. He was appointed to the Iowa Department of Transportation Commission in 2022 and chaired it until this past July. Ray often said that ''when we work together, we all benefit.'' He lived by that motto, and Iowa agriculture is stronger because of it.

I had the privilege of calling Ray a close friend, and time and again I saw that commitment up close. Whenever I had a question about agriculture, Ray was my first call. He had a lifetime of knowledge and never hesitated to share it. If I needed his counsel, Ray would drop what he was doing, drive to Des Moines, sit down with me, and talk through how we could deliver for Iowa's farmers. That is one of the things I will miss most about him.

Ray and Elaine were in my corner from the very beginning, but more importantly, they were always in Iowa's corner. From his glass-topped silo looking over his slice of Heaven on the Gaesser farm, to leading delegations around the world, Ray brought an unmatched knowledge of agriculture and a genuine friendship wherever he went. Oftentimes, just his smile and a good farm story were enough to forge a new partnership, build trust in Iowa, and strengthen a legacy of service he spent a lifetime creating.

Ray leaves behind his wife, Elaine; their children, Chris and Jennifer; and a legacy that will endure in the land he cared for and the farmers he spent his life fighting for.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life and legacy of Ray Gaesser: a devoted farmer, a national voice for American agriculture, and a faithful friend to all who worked the land.

HONORING FAITH, HOPE & LOVE WORSHIP CENTER

HON. CLEO FIELDS

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 14, 2026

Mr. FIELDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Faith, Hope & Love Worship Center, a church with deep spiritual roots in St. Francisville, Louisiana. Established in 1985 under the leadership of Bishop Dwight D. Pate, the ministry grew in strength and fellowship. In July 1989, Ronald E. Hardy, Sr. was installed as pastor of what was then known as Faith, Hope and Love Fellowship, beginning a new chapter of leadership and vision within the congregation.

In 2002, God spoke to Bishop Dwight D. Pate to release Faith, Hope & Love to Pastor Ronald Hardy, Sr., prompting a formal celebration and prophetic proclamation of 2002 as 'The Year of the Double.' During a revival later that year, God spoke through a prophet, declaring that an extended work was required. God instructed Pastor Hardy to establish a second location for the ministry in Baton Rouge, sharing that there was a harvest of family, friends, and others who needed to be reached. Following divine direction, Pastor Hardy was led to a building on Wooddale Boulevard.

On December 25, 2002—Christmas Day—Faith, Hope & Love of Baton Rouge opened, marking a historic expansion of the ministry. Faith, Hope & Love Fellowship became Faith, Hope and Love Worship Center: one church in two locations. Soon afterwards, land was purchased and a new church facility was built on Choctaw Drive. With this expansion, the ministry embraced its mission to reach families and communities across both cities with a message of hope, faith, and transformational love.

Mr. Speaker, Faith, Hope & Love Worship Center is a multifaceted church dedicated to bringing restoration to the lives of God's people. Its ministry is grounded in introducing individuals to Christ and teaching them to live the abundant life through the Word of God. As Faith, Hope & Love continues to grow and fulfill its mission, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this remarkable church for its decades of service, spiritual leadership, and dedication to strengthening communities in both St. Francisville and Baton Rouge.

RECOGNIZING KEREN CERVANTES RODRIGUEZ

HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 14, 2026

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Keren Cervantes Rodriguez for earning the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth Award.

Keren has overcome many challenges along her journey to success, demonstrating perseverance at every step. Students who strive to make the most of their education, like Keren, develop crucial skills and a work ethic that will guide them for the rest of their lives. This award is a testament to Keren's hard work, determination, and perseverance at Jefferson Jr/Sr High School and is clearly just the beginning of a bright and promising future.

It is my honor to congratulate Keren Cervantes Rodriguez on achieving the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth Award.

HONORING THE 65TH ANNIVERSARY OF ALBANY TECHNICAL COLLEGE

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 14, 2026

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Albany Technical College of Albany, Georgia, on the occasion of its 65th anniversary.

Mr. Speaker, in 1961 this institution opened its doors as the Monroe Area Vocational Technical School with 175 students. One hundred seventy-five. In a segregated South Georgia, in a year when very few people in authority believed that the children of sharecroppers and mill hands and domestic workers needed anything more than a strong back, somebody in Albany, Georgia, decided otherwise.

The Albany Area Vocational-Technical School followed shortly after, and in 1972 the two schools were joined together at the campus the college occupies today. In July of 1988, with the formation of what is now the Technical College System of Georgia, the school became Albany Technical Institute and was charged with serving a seven-county region—Baker, Calhoun, Clay, Dougherty, Lee, Randolph, and Terrell—some of the most rural and most economically challenged counties in the United States of America. And on July 6, 2000, having met the standard set by the General Assembly in House Bill 1187 to award the associate degree, Albany Technical Institute became Albany Technical College.

Mr. Speaker, 65 years is a long time to keep a promise. It has been kept by every person who ever led this institution by President Howard Water, by President Wayne Israel, by President Nathaniel Cross, by President Alvin Anderson, by President Dr. Anthony O. Parker, and today by Dr. Emmett L. Griswold—and by every instructor who ever stood in a shop with a clipboard and refused to let a student quit.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot tell the story of this college without telling the story of two men.

Dr. Anthony O. Parker became the fifth president of Albany Technical College in 1995, arriving in a community still digging itself out from the great flood of 1994, and he led the rebuilding. He stayed for 27 years—the longest-serving president in the history of the college and the longest-serving president in the entire Technical College System of Georgia. He built the enrollment. He built the buildings. He built partnerships with the Marine Corps Logistics Base and with industry across this region. He was among the first technical college presidents in Georgia to raise a million dollars in private money for his campus. And he never stopped fighting for adult learners—for the grown man and the grown woman who walked in for a GED and walked out with a career.

Mr. Speaker, in November of 2011, I stood on that campus as Albany Tech dedicated its new library and media center in Dr. Parker's honor. I read a tribute to him into this very Record that day, and I presented him a flag that had flown over this Capitol in his name. He told us then why that building meant what it meant to him: his mother had been a librarian, and as a boy he was made to stop at the county library and study on his way home before he was ever allowed to go outside and play. He said that at the time he did not appreciate it. He said that he had come to appreciate it very much.

Mr. Speaker, on the morning of June 6, 2022, Dr. Anthony Parker passed away. He was 69 years old. He did not retire. He did not slow down. He had plans on the books for the next 5 years. He simply did not come to work one morning, and Southwest Georgia has not stopped missing him since.

Here, Mr. Speaker, is the part of this story that I want the House to hear.

In 2004, a man named Emmett Griswold walked through the front door of Albany Technical College to teach criminal justice. He had come out of law enforcement and corrections—a probation and parole officer for the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, a deputy warden for the Georgia Department of Corrections—a man whose working life had been spent among people the world had already given up on. He was a native of Milledgeville who had made Albany his home.

He held his bachelor's and master's degrees from Albany State University, and he would go on to earn his doctorate from Valdosta State.

Dr. Parker took him under his wing. And Dr. Griswold rose—department chairman, dean of academic affairs, vice president for academic affairs, executive vice president—every rung of it, at the same institution, for 18 years.

When the college lost its president without warning, Albany Tech did not have to look outside for somebody to carry it. He was already there. On November 1, 2022, Dr. Emmett L. Griswold became the sixth president of Albany Technical College, standing on the foundation laid by his mentor and his friend.

Mr. Speaker, that is what 65 years of an institution actually looks like. Not a building. Not a seal. A man who taught, mentored, and believed in another man—who then took up the same work and kept the doors open for the next one.

Those doors, Mr. Speaker, have never asked a single student what their father did for a living. They have opened for the single mother working nights. For the man laid off at 45 who had to start over. For the young person nobody expected anything from, who is today a lineman, a nurse, a welder, a diesel technician, a logistics specialist—who owns a home, pays taxes, and raises children who will never know what it was to go without.

That is the harvest of 65 years in Southwest Georgia.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Albany Technical College on sixty-fiye years of service, in commending President Emmett L. Griswold, his faculty, his staff, and his Board of Directors, in honoring the memory of Dr. Anthony O. Parker and all who led before him, and in wishing this great institution many more years of transforming lives across Southwest Georgia.

HONORING CONSUL OF MEXICO, MAXAIRA BALTAZAR

HON. J. LUIS CORREA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 14, 2026

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Consul of Mexico, Maxaira Baltazar, for her 20 years of leadership and experience in consular affairs and bilateral relations.

Maxaira first began her career in Del Rio, Texas, where served as Consul for Protection and Legal Affairs, later being assigned to serve as Consul of Mexico for the Mexican Embassy in the Czech Republic.

Upon her return to the United States in 2015, Maxaira completed a specialization in U.S. Legal Studies at The University of New Mexico's School of Law. Always striving for more, she went on to collaborate with the Federal Public Defender's Office and the criminal, family, and child legal divisions of New Mexico's Second Judicial District Court.

As part of her specialization, she went on to develop guidelines for ways to assist nationals in child custody-related matters.

Throughout her career, Maxaira has served the U.S. Department of State, where she took part in a U.S.-Mexico Consular Exchange program dedicated to providing international assistance for Mexican nationals during the tumultuous suspension of travel period caused by the COVID–19 pandemic, drafting guidance for Mexican missions abroad during times of crisis.

Most recently, Maxaira has served as Counselor for House Affairs in the Congressional Relations Office at the Mexican Embassy in the U.S. Now, Maxaira has assumed her current post as Consul of Mexico in Santa Ana, serving the Mexican-American communities in my home District and beyond.

I ask my colleagues to join me in commending Maxaira for her 20 years of dedicated leadership and experience. We thank Maxaira for all that she does to protect, inform, and inspire our Nation's Mexican-American communities.

RECOGNIZING ABIGAIL ROTH, GRADES 6 THROUGH 8 WINNER OF WISCONSIN'S 6TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2026 STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST

HON. GLENN GROTHMAN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 14, 2026

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Abigail Roth, the winner of the sixth through eighth grade division of my 2026 Student Essay Contest, and to commend this outstanding young person from Wisconsin's 6th Congressional District for her thoughtful reflections on our country and system of government.

Abigail, a seventh-grade student at Neenah Middle School, was selected as the winner for her essay on the importance of an informed and educated citizenry, strong communities, civic engagement, and the ability of Americans to work together to improve our country.

I am proud to recognize Abigail for the time, effort, and thought she put into her essay. Her work demonstrates an appreciation for the responsibilities of citizenship and the principles that have helped make our nation strong. I congratulate her on this achievement and am pleased to include in the RECORD her winning essay:

ABIGAIL ROTH—NEENAH MIDDLE SCHOOL, 7TH GRADE

I believe America's strength comes from our nation's ability to grow and move forward with the engagement and attention of the citizens. To realize America's strength, the citizens must be well informed and educated. Those citizens create communities that generate trust between their neighbors to influence policy. When those communities unite, America has a system in place to change the fate of our governmental system for the better. This system can create long lasting change in America, improving the country for future generations.

In order for America to grow and move forward, the public must be well informed and well educated. Everyone that has the right to vote should have access to education. Education creates a solid base of knowledge and skills necessary to promote individual civic responsibility. Civic responsibility is important because it leads to engagement with our country, necessary for a strong democracy and nation. Without the ability to read the ballot, how can we expect anyone to be engaged with democratic process? Next, having a well informed public that knows what is going on in the nation is very important. It's not enough that citizens can read, it is that they do read, and learn about issues in their government that they care about. With robust information, a well informed public enlivens democracy to grow and move forward, because people can make better decisions about what is happening in their country. To have a well informed public, reliable sources of information must be available. Newspapers, news channels, and government reports that adhere to standards which promote reliability and trustworthiness are valuable. These information sources create an environment where good faith debate and discussion can occur. America's strength is tied to its citizen's ability to constructively debate the issues of the moment.

Secondly, America derives strength from the trust built through engaged communities. When citizens are engaged with the issues that are affecting their community they can unite and come together to improve. When a community solves a problem they build trust by talking to each other and working together to fix the problem. People get involved in their community by joining events, talking to neighbors and joining clubs in their community. Anything that requires multiple people to interact in a community creates familiarity and trust. The government especially requires familiarity and trust from its constituents. As people work with each other to address issues in their community, those same people grow to become influential parts of the government. Whether they submit public comments, letters to their representatives or running for local office, these people exert influence on governance that leads to improvement. This process of well-informed, and educated citizens engaging with the issues of their community keeps growing until a chain of trust bonds every person. America derives strength from the trust through communities that come together and unite.

Lastly, we have built a system of government that can improve upon itself. When we have a well informed and well educated public we can create good ideas. These good ideas will be tested by the community through discussion and debate to identify and refine them into great ideas. Then those great ideas will be carried up from local to state to federal politicians who can deploy them to help the nation. An example of this is the 19th amendment that gave women the right to vote. Over the span of about 70 years, the idea of women's suffrage spread grew from novel, to good, to great, until finally being ratified in 1920. In other forms of government, like the British monarchy from which the USA revolted, citizens' ideas take a back seat to what the leader wants. But in this nation we have created a system where things can change and be better.

Overall, America's strength comes from a public being well informed. That public must belong to communities that create trust and generate great ideas. Those great ideas then inform the governmental system that adapts to become better. To make America stronger, citizens must obtain good education, keep themselves well informed, build community to discuss and debate how America can improve, and engage in the political process to see their ideas come into law. America's strength will improve if we work together to ensure that all citizens can partake in this country's growth.