

HONORING NATIONAL HISPANIC
HERITAGE MONTH**HON. FRANK J. MRVAN**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Mr. MRVAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor and celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month and its 2026 theme, Together We Are More. From September 15 to October 15 each year, the people of the United States are granted the opportunity to commemorate the rich culture, established traditions, and invaluable contributions of Hispanic Americans throughout our country's history.

Hispanic Heritage Month begins each year on September 15 and recognizes the anniversaries of the independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Mexico and Chile observe their independence days on September 16 and September 18, respectively. This month, communities across Indiana's 1st Congressional District will gather for parades and celebrations to observe National Hispanic Heritage Month in the city of East Chicago, Indiana.

As a Nation, we are grateful for the hard work and invaluable contributions of generations of Hispanic Americans. The cultural vitality and economic success of Northwest Indiana depend on the Hispanic families within our community. Therefore, in accordance with this year's theme, I would like to extend my gratitude to the many family-owned Hispanic businesses in Northwest Indiana that have contributed immeasurably to the prosperity and development of our region and beyond.

It is my honor to recognize the Garza family, the owners of El Popular, which is the oldest Mexican business within the United States. In 1925, El Popular was founded in East Chicago by Vincente Garza, who had migrated to the area from Monterrey, Mexico only a few years prior. He took several family recipes with him and a dream of founding a Mexican food manufacturing business. El Popular started off as a local family business, but because of the tireless efforts of the Garza family, their products are now offered in more than 10,000 locations nationwide. The Garza family and El Popular are responsible for the creation of hundreds of jobs that support hardworking families throughout our region.

Vincente Garza eventually passed the company to his son, Richard. In 2002, Richard's son, Edward, became the third-generation owner of El Popular. Throughout this time, the business has remained dedicated to its mission of providing for the community through the preservation and distribution of authentic Mexican flavors. For their efforts to create job opportunities and grow our economy, the Garza family and El Popular are worthy of the highest praise.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my other distinguished colleagues to join me in celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month and honoring the generations of families who have built successful businesses that contribute to our society and our economy. This month, and always, we appreciate the deep heritage and cultural diversity Hispanic Americans have promoted within our country.

HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN
HERO CATHERINE "CAT" JOHNSON**HON. BETH VAN DUYNE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize our Texas-24 Hometown Hero, Catherine "Cat" Johnson, a Southlake native and a Shelton School alumna, who recently began her journey at Texas Tech University. She has earned national recognition for her leadership and service to our North Texas community.

This summer, Cat created take-home meal kits that ensured the children would have access to healthy meals over the weekend if their families were suffering from financial hardships. Cat worked with GRACE in Grapevine to bring her project, "Feed our Kids Weekend Edition" to life. This project led to her earning the Girl Scouts Gold Award, the highest honor in Girl Scouting from the Girl Scouts of Texas Oklahoma Plains. In recognition for her impact in the community in helping address childhood hunger she received a \$5,000 national scholarship from Girl Scouts of the USA.

I congratulate Cat on this recognition for her service to our community and wish her the best in her year ahead at Texas Tech University.

RECOGNIZING NYDIA PADILLA-
RODRIGUEZ**HON. JOSEPH D. MORELLE**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Mr. MORELLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Mrs. Nydia Padilla-Rodriguez of Rochester, New York, on the occasion of her retirement after a lifetime of extraordinary service to our community.

Born in Puerto Rico and later making Rochester her home, Nydia Padilla-Rodriguez has devoted her life to preserving and celebrating Puerto Rican culture through the performing arts. As the leader of the Borinquen Dance Theatre for more than 40 years, she has inspired generations of young people through dance, music, and folklore, while creating opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds to experience and appreciate Puerto Rican traditions. Together with her husband, John Padilla-Rodriguez, she has provided steadfast leadership and extraordinary personal generosity to build the theatre into a treasured cultural institution and a cornerstone of Rochester's vibrant arts community.

Nydia's own journey is a testament to resilience and the transformative power of opportunity. Rising from an at-risk youth to become a respected educator, mentor, and cultural leader, she transformed her personal experiences into a lifelong commitment to serving others. Over more than 30 years as an educator, she has inspired and empowered countless young people to pursue their aspirations while remaining deeply connected to their cultural heritage.

Throughout her distinguished career, Nydia has been recognized with numerous honors, including the Girl Scouts of Genesee Valley's

Woman of Influence Award, the IBERO-American Action League's Alice Torres Award, Geva Theatre's Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award, the Rochester Business Journal's Woman of Excellence Award, and designation as a New York State Woman of Distinction, among many others. These accolades reflect not only her remarkable accomplishments, but also the profound and lasting impact she has made on the Rochester community.

Mr. Speaker, as Mrs. Nydia Padilla-Rodriguez begins a well-earned retirement, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating her extraordinary legacy of leadership, service, and cultural stewardship. Her unwavering dedication to uplifting others through education and the arts has enriched our community immeasurably, and her influence will continue to inspire generations to come. I extend my deepest gratitude and best wishes to Nydia and her family as she embarks on this next chapter.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NO FENC-
ING AT THE UNITED STATES
CAPITOL COMPLEX ACT**HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON**

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the No Fencing at the United States Capitol Complex Act, which would prohibit the installation of permanent fencing at the United States Capitol complex. Senator CHRIS VAN HOLLEN is introducing this bill in the Senate.

Permanent fencing at the Capitol complex would send an un-American message to the Nation and the world by transforming our democracy from one that is accessible, transparent, and of the people, to one that is closed off, secretive, and fearful of its own citizens. It would tell the world that the most powerful Nation must rely on crude barriers for safety instead of state-of-the-art intelligence and security protocols. The Capitol complex has welcomed First Amendment demonstrations for centuries without becoming a fortress. The openness of the Capitol complex and our democracy is a strength, not a weakness that needs to be rooted out.

Furthermore, the Capitol complex does not exist in a vacuum. It is immediately surrounded by residential neighborhoods and local businesses. Permanent fencing would cause serious damage to the fabric of these communities. After the January 6th insurrection, the Capitol complex became an untraversable fortress surrounded by frightening fences capped with barbed wire typical of authoritarian regimes. These residents and businesses were more than understanding as their neighborhoods turned into militarized zones. They waited patiently as officers checked their identification on their walks home or took alternative routes when they found blocked streets. Permanent fencing would limit their ability, as well as the general public's ability, to enjoy the public spaces that define our Nation's capital.

The distance between government and the people has grown, with trust in government at historic lows. We should not increase that distance by placing intimidating barriers between public servants and the people they serve, especially when such barriers are unnecessary.

Security is not only about reducing risk. It is also about safeguarding the freedoms and values that anchor our country, not only for ourselves but for future generations. Public property should be open to the public. Americans should not have to peer at their democracy from behind fences.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RON ESTES

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Mr. ESTES. Mr. Speaker, I was not present for the following Roll Call votes. Had I been present, I would have voted as follows:

Yea on Roll Call No. 296, on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 4219, the National Wildlife Refuge System Invasive Species Strike Team Act of 2025; and

Yea on Roll Call No. 297, on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 3276, the Local Communities & Bird Habitat Stewardship Act of 2026.

RECOGNIZING KIMBERLI BALLARD

HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

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

Kimberli 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 Kimberli, develop crucial skills and a work ethic that will guide them for the rest of their lives. This award is a testament to Kimberli's hard work, determination, and perseverance at Jefferson Junior/Senior High School and is clearly just the beginning of a bright and promising future.

It is my honor to congratulate Kimberli Ballard on achieving the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth Award.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ANN WAGNER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I regret that I was not present for Roll Call votes on September 14, 2026. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 296, and YEA on Roll Call No. 297.

HONORING MAYOR ALIX DESULME

HON. FREDERICA S. WILSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, from the 24th District of the great state of Florida,

I rise today to honor Mayor Alix Desulme for his philanthropy and commitment to helping at-risk youth.

I am honored to reach out on behalf of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project to present him with a Congressional Award for his outstanding leadership and dedication to the City of North Miami. Each year, we recognize distinguished Role Model Mentors, and it is a pleasure to extend our congratulations as to him as he joins this esteemed group. His recent re-election as Mayor is a testament to his remarkable achievements. As one of the youngest Haitian Americans to hold such a position, his impact on the community has been profound. His leadership has driven significant progress in economic development, infrastructure improvement, and community empowerment, guided by his principle of "Putting People First." His commitment to creating a supportive environment for youth is commendable.

Through his initiatives, he has addressed the challenges faced by young individuals, especially those from underserved backgrounds. His focus on promoting educational opportunities and mentorship aligns perfectly with the mission of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, fostering pathways for success and instilling hope in the next generation. It is a privilege to recognize his achievements and express gratitude for your commitment to enhancing quality of life in North Miami. His leadership inspires both youth and the broader community to strive for excellence and unity. I congratulate him on this well-deserved recognition. I look forward to our continued partnership in empowering young leaders.

We now recognize Mayor Alix Desulme for his exemplary leadership and steadfast dedication to the North Miami community. Mayor Alix Desulme is valued as one of the youngest Haitian Americans to hold such a pivotal position in the City of North Miami. As a young leader, he has significantly influenced the lives of numerous residents. Under his stewardship, the city has achieved notable advancements in economic development, enhancements to infrastructure, and the empowerment of the community.

RECOGNIZING BRIYANAH RODRIGUEZ VEGA

HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

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

Briyanah 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 Briyanah, develop crucial skills and a work ethic that will guide them for the rest of their lives. This award is a testament to Briyanah's hard work, determination, and perseverance at Drake Middle School and is clearly just the beginning of a bright and promising future.

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

HONORING EVENING STAR BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. CLEO FIELDS

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Mr. FIELDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Evening Star Baptist Church. In 1889, Green Dyer and Harrison Davis settled in the community now known as Baker, Louisiana. In 1890, there was no place to worship within the community, therefore, the new families traveled to Holly Grove Baptist Church or sometimes traveled to the Chaneyville Community to worship. The men traveled by horses to their former communities for service on Sundays. The women started a prayer meeting at the home of Mrs. Fannie Davis. The prayer meetings were so inspirational and uplifting that the women decided to hold their prayer meetings in the afternoons when the men returned.

At one of these prayer meetings, in 1895, the group decided to organize a church naming it 'Evening Star Baptist Church' after witnessing a falling star in the sky. Green Dyer confessed his calling to minister God's word, and Evening Star Baptist Church ordained Reverend Green Dyer and installed him as their first pastor. He gave one-half acre of land, and Henry Davis gave one-fourth acre of land to build the first sanctuary of Evening Star. The building was twenty-four feet long and eighteen feet wide.

In September 1909, a storm destroyed the church. This was a great burden on Reverend Green Dyer's heart; and, in 1910, he died before the church was re-erected. He served as pastor of Evening Star for 15 years. Following Reverend Dyer's death, Reverend Jack Mitchell was elected pastor and served only one year. Reverends Bosky and Henry Millican served as acting pastors for short periods.

In 1913, Reverend George Youngblood was ordained and elected pastor of Evening Star. Reverend Youngblood served with commitment and dedication for 46 years. During the latter years of his pastorship, he became ill. Reverend Thomas J. Carter was ordained and elected assistant pastor to the aging Pastor Youngblood and served as assistant for 11 years.

On July 15, 1959, Reverend Thomas J. Carter was elected pastor. In 1962, under Reverend Carter's leadership, a new sanctuary was built at the present location. Sister Florence Dyer Todd donated the land for the new sanctuary. Reverend Carter served Evening Star for 25 years. He died January 15, 1984. Reverend Lionel Lee, Sr. became an associate minister under Reverend Carter and served for eight years. After Reverend Carter's death, during the summer of 1984, Reverend Lionel Lee, Sr. was elected pastor.

From its inception, Evening Star Baptist Church has been an active member of the Fourth District Missionary Baptist Association, Louisiana State Baptist Association, and the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. Reverend Green Dyer and Reverend George Youngblood served as Secretaries of the Fourth District Baptist Association. Pastor Lee continued this tradition by serving as secretary of the association for ten years and was named General Secretary Emeritus.