

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.

Evening Star continued to grow in spiritual aspirations, community outreach, and ministries under Reverend Lee's leadership. Many milestones were accomplished, including paved parking lot and purchased van; outreach ministry to the nursing home and drug rehab center; Sisterhood and Brotherhood collaboration with Shady Grove First Baptist Church; establishment of male chorus and combined choirs; creation of the Board of Christian Education, Ushers' Ministry, and Deaconess Ministry; Pastor's Travel Expense Club; Church Mission Fund, Boy Scouts; Project Drug Free Lines; Saturday Street Prayer Ministry; Youth Council and Ministry; Summer Youth Employment; Summer Enrichment Program; Tutorial Program; Summer History Learning Project; Exercise Program; participation in local, state, national Congress of Christian Education, and international Baptist World Congress events; and rebuilding and renovating Evening Star Baptist Church from 1996 to 1997.

On July 7, 1996, Evening Star held its groundbreaking service for a long-awaited project. Renovations began on July 8, 1996, and on August 17, 1997, the congregation moved into the new sanctuary. In July 2001, after serving seventeen years, Reverend Lionel Lee, Sr. was called to his reward. In December 2002, Reverend Dr. Roderick A. Betts was elected and installed as pastor. Under Reverend Betts' leadership, Evening Star replaced its organ and sound system, established an Inspirational Choir, revived the Liturgical Dance Team, held Saturday Intercessory Prayer, established an Oratorical Ministry, and formed a Women Choir.

We acknowledge Evening Star Baptist Church for recently celebrating its 129th Anniversary. It is a thriving community church under the leadership of Pastor Aldora Sanford, who has served this great church since 2012. I ask my colleagues to join me honoring Evening Star Baptist Church for over a century for service, fellowship, and spreading of the word of God.

**HONORING THE LIFE, SERVICE
AND LEGACY OF THE HONOR-
ABLE HELEN M. JOHNSON**

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Mrs. Helen M. Johnson, a trailblazing public servant, entrepreneur, community leader, devoted matriarch, and woman of faith from Hollandale, Mississippi, who passed away on August 22, 2026.

Helen was born on September 15, 1954, the thirteenth child of Leroy and Daisy Smith. She was educated at Simmons Elementary School and Simmons High School and later earned her GED. A lifelong learner, she continued her education through Draughtons Business College, Delta State University, Mississippi State University Extension Service, and the International Institute of Municipal Clerks.

Helen's life was marked by perseverance. As a young woman, she struggled with a severe stutter that affected her confidence. Through speech therapy, determination, and

faith, she overcame that challenge. The young woman who once struggled to speak confidently would later become a respected public official, trainer, mentor, and community leader.

Helen built a distinguished career in municipal government. She became the first Black radio dispatcher for the City of Hollandale, later served approximately fifteen years as Deputy City Clerk, and in 2001 became the first Black City Clerk of Hollandale, Mississippi. She faithfully served as City Clerk until 2021.

Her commitment to public service did not end with her retirement as City Clerk. Helen continued training and mentoring municipal clerks, established HMJ Consulting Services, LLC, and served as a Municipal Clerk Consultant Officer with HOPE Enterprise. She later continued her service to the citizens of Hollandale as an Alderwoman and Vice Mayor of the City of Hollandale, positions she faithfully held at the time of her passing.

Helen was also a successful entrepreneur. Alongside her husband, John Wesley Johnson, she began a jewelry business that eventually grew into Something Special Fashions, with locations in Hollandale, Leland, Sunflower, and Cleveland. A talented seamstress, she was well known for her creativity, elegance, professionalism, and sense of style.

Helen's commitment to service extended throughout her community. She served in leadership roles with the Hollandale Rotary Club, Mississippi Municipal Clerks Association, Community Foundation of Washington County, South Delta Planning & Development District, Hollandale Economic and Community Development Foundation, and Hollandale Community Volunteers for Progress.

Her faith remained the foundation of her life. Helen joined First Baptist Missionary Baptist Church at the age of twelve and remained a faithful member throughout her lifetime.

Above all, Helen was devoted to her family. She was a loving wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, sister, aunt, mentor, and friend. She believed that family was defined not only by blood, but also by love, sacrifice, guidance, and care.

Mr. Speaker, Helen M. Johnson lived a life of faith, perseverance, service, and purpose. From breaking barriers in municipal government to serving as Vice Mayor and Alderwoman, she devoted her life to strengthening Hollandale and improving the lives of those around her.

The young girl who once struggled to find her voice ultimately used that voice to teach, lead, encourage, and serve.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life and legacy of Alderwoman Helen M. Johnson and in extending our deepest condolences to her family, friends, church family, colleagues, and the entire Hollandale community.

**HONORING TEXAS-24 HOMETOWN
HERO JULES PETERSON**

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, Jules Peterson. She is the Founder and Director of

Loving Long Ears Donkey Therapy & Sanctuary in Southlake. Since 2017, Loving Long Ears has been a sanctuary for donkeys that have been neglected, abused, or surrendered, giving them not just a new home, but also a new purpose. They serve as one of only four donkey rescues in the United States, and the only one that also offers a therapy program.

Through Jules' dedication, she has built a place where rescued donkeys are rehabilitated and trained as therapy animals. These gentle companions now bring peace, comfort, and healing to veterans, first responders, children, and adults.

We thank Jules for dedicating her time, energy, and heart to creating Loving Long Ears Donkey Therapy & Sanctuary.

**RECOGNIZING ARTURO ARO
CALVILLO**

HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

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

Arturo has overcome many challenges along his journey to success, demonstrating perseverance at every step. Students who strive to make the most of their education, like Arturo, develop crucial skills and a work ethic that will guide them for the rest of their lives. This award is a testament to Arturo'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 Arturo Aro Calvillo on achieving the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth Award.

HONORING CHERYL D. LARKIN

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 the accomplishments of Alpha Alpha Beta Omega Chapter under the Leadership of Basileus Cheryl D. Larkin on the occasion of the end of her presidency. I include in the RECORD the following proclamation:

Whereas, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Alpha Alpha Beta Omega Chapter, was chartered on April 15, 1918, by 58 dedicated Charter Members who sought to uphold the Sorority's legacy of service and sisterhood; and Whereas, the chapter has since grown in both membership and impact, expanding to include 115 dynamic women; and Whereas, under the extraordinary leadership of Charter Member and Basileus Cheryl D. Larkin, who has faithfully served as President from January 2023 to December 2024, the chapter flourished in alignment with her administration's inspiring theme, We Are One—Excelling Through Service, Leadership, and the Spirit of Sisterly Love; and