

penny counts, especially during the holiday season. Elsa Duenez, owner of Paradise Gym in San Dimas, took this busy and valuable time to use their business to give back to the community by organizing a month-long fundraiser and toy drive to support the children and families of the City of Hope, one of the largest cancer research and treatment hospitals in the United States.

Paradise Gym encouraged patrons and community members to donate new toys to children and their families, sharing the message that donating toys not only gives joy but offers hope to those navigating cancer treatments and care for their loved ones.

The support and community of southern California is unlike any other, and I am so proud to see our neighbors come together and give back. This is a true testament to the character of Paradise Gym and the power of community and service.

I thank Elsa and the staff at Paradise Gym for their commitment to service. We are so grateful for them.

CONGRATULATING RORIMER ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL

Mr. CISNEROS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge an outstanding accomplishment by Rorimer Elementary School in La Puente, California, a part of the Rowland Unified School District in California's 31st District.

Rorimer Elementary has been designated as a 2026 Seal of Excellence School by the California Association for Bilingual Education, one of only four schools in California awarded this designation after undergoing an extensive review process.

This award recognizes schools for their strong vision for biliteracy, multicultural competency, and educational equity.

As a Spanish dual language immersion school, Rorimer Elementary has demonstrated notable gains in academic achievements and bilingual proficiency among English learners using effective research-based instructional strategies.

Rorimer Elementary's success has been built through creation of a school-wide culture that embraces and celebrates developing students' bilingual language proficiency and cultural awareness in grades TK-6.

The strong relationship built between Rorimer's teachers, staff, and families has been central to the school's success.

Congratulations to the team at Rorimer Elementary for setting an amazing example for bilingual education.

RECOGNIZING CHRISTOPHER NIGG ON HIS  
RETIREMENT

Mr. CISNEROS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize former La Verne Fire Chief Christopher Nigg for his distinguished time of service with the La Verne Fire Department.

While in service at the department, he led significant operational and organizational advancements, strength-

ening emergency response, workforce readiness, and regional integration.

Chief Nigg worked collaboratively with regional partners to enhance service-and-response delivery, fostering a culture of professionalism, trust, and shared accountability focused on serving the community.

Notably, he led the department to streamline emergency response with an efficient ambulance operator program and established a comprehensive succession plan for long-term organizational stability.

I am so grateful for his leadership and service, promoting safety for the community in California's 31st District. He will be remembered as a team player, fierce advocate for fire prevention, and an innovative leader. We wish him the best in the next chapter of his life.

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF ROUTE 66

Mr. CISNEROS. Mr. Speaker, 2026 marks the 100th anniversary of the most famous road in the country, Route 66, and it travels right through the 31st Congressional District in California.

Last month, the city of Azusa unveiled its Route 66 centennial monument and mural at the newly designated Route 66 Tribute Corner in honor of this historic highway. This new mural and monument are part of a series of monuments that will be unveiled from Chicago to Santa Monica as part of the official project organized by the U.S. Route 66 Centennial Commission.

Mr. Speaker, we are excited that many will continue to get their kicks on Route 66, as we celebrate this historic highway that connected our community to the rest of the country and opened up a pathway for migration, tourism, and development in the San Gabriel Valley and the great State of California.

NATIONAL SCOUTING DAY

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate an organization that is near and dear to my heart, Scouting America.

February 8 is National Scouting America Day, which recognizes the legacy of the organization and the young Americans who have gone from Scouts to leaders in their communities.

On May 17, 1977, I became an Eagle Scout myself, as a member of Scout Troop 52 in Walker Township, Pennsylvania. Over the years, I proudly held various leadership roles with Scout troops in Pennsylvania, including two separate stints as Scoutmaster for Troop 353 in Howard.

During my time as a Scoutmaster, I was honored to see many young men achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. Since the rank's inception, close to 3 million Scouts have earned Eagle Scout status.

Scouting America—formerly known as the Boy Scouts of America, and ac-

tually that is still the name of the movement as chartered by Congress—was established in 1910 by William D. Boyce. The mission of the organization is to prepare children for lives of impact and purpose. Since it was founded, more than 130 million young men and women have participated in Scouting America's programs.

Mr. Speaker, at its core, Scouting encourages its members to leave our country and the world a little better than they found it. Scouting America has helped build future leaders by combining educational activities and lifelong values with fun. Scouting founder, Lord Baden-Powell of England, defined Scouting as a game with a purpose. Through over a century of experience, we know that helping youth is a key to building a more conscientious, responsible, and productive society.

I am proud to co-chair the Congressional Scouting Caucus. This past summer, we welcomed dozens of Scouts from across the country to Camp Capitol Hill and Eagles on the Hill. This was an opportunity for Scouts to meet with Representatives and showcase what they have learned or built as a Scout. It was an honor to see the various projects Scouts have completed. All of them demonstrated the important values of service, community, and character.

Scouting demands physicality, innovation, curiosity, and for participants to enjoy the outdoors. It gives Scouts the opportunity to try new recreational activities like mountain biking, kayaking, and camping. All of these activities are an ode to the beautiful landscapes across our Nation and experiences that a Scout will never forget.

Scouts explore their interests and improve their skills while working toward Scouting's highest rank, Eagle. By first imagining, planning, then doing their own service projects, Scouts learn the value of hard work and experience the thrill of seeing it pay off.

Scouts are known as leaders within their communities, and approximately 15 percent of all military academy cadets and midshipmen across the United States' service academies are Eagle Scouts.

I am grateful for the longstanding partnership between Scouting America and the Department of War. I can think of no better recruitment tool for our military than the lessons learned through Scouting.

Mr. Speaker, Scouting has touched the lives of so many. I am proud of the way it has shaped our youth. I wish a happy 116th birthday to Scouting America.

CHANGES AT THE KENNEDY  
CENTER

(Ms. PINGREE of Maine was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. PINGREE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because of something deeply

troubling that is happening to one of the most treasured cultural institutions in our country, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Yes, it is the John F. Kennedy Center.

Over the weekend, the President announced on Truth Social, of course, that he intends to shut down the Kennedy Center for approximately 2 years for so-called renovations. Since then, he has talked about leaving the building's steel fully exposed, raising questions about whether this is a renovation at all or something far more drastic.

Let's take a step back. The Kennedy Center is not a private real estate project. It is not a campaign prop. It is not a vanity playground for demolition. It is a national cultural institution, created by Congress in 1958, and later dedicated to President John F. Kennedy after his death. It opened in 1971 as a living memorial to a man who believed the arts were essential to democracy itself. The name, the mission, the existence all come from statute, law. No social media post, no board reshuffle, and no personal declaration has the legal authority to change that.

For more than 50 years, the Kennedy Center has been a place where Americans of every background could come together to experience excellence in music, theater, dance, and culture. It was built to foster national unity, artistic expression, and America's creative spirit, not to feed the ego of a single individual.

Unfortunately, over the past year, we have watched the systematic takeover, with board members fired, loyalists installed, programming politicized, and artists walking away in droves. The consequences were immediate.

Though Donald Trump's hand-picked leadership has been suspiciously tight-lipped about the Center's finances, they reportedly oversaw an 82 percent decline in theater subscriptions, a 57 percent drop in ballet packages, and a \$1.6 million loss in ticket sales in just a matter of months.

The decline was not because the building had suddenly become dangerous. It is because artists and audiences rejected what the Kennedy Center has been becoming. Now, rather than reverse course, the President's solution is to close it for 2 years?

According to reporting this week, many board members, staff, performers, and even Trump-appointed officials were blindsided by this announcement. There was no plan presented, no consultation, no transparency.

The New York Times reports that budget documents describe needed maintenance, yes, but nothing that required shutting down the entire institution. In fact, the very official overseeing facilities said that just 2 months ago, there were no serious discussions about closing the Center.

What changed? What changed is that the Center could no longer sustain programming. Artists were pulling out,

performances were being canceled, ticket sales were collapsing. With every bad story detailing what the Center has become under President Trump's control, the more of a headache and source of embarrassment it became for the President.

Now this renovation begins to look less like infrastructure work and more like a cover story for institutional failure.

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As the top Democrat of the Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees the Kennedy Center's funding, I can tell you this: We have repeatedly asked for financial information, for meetings, for transparency about what is happening inside the center. Our requests have been ignored.

That should alarm every Member of this body because this is not just about a building. It is about whether Congress is going to allow a President to seize control of a congressionally created institution, run it into the ground, and then unilaterally shut it down without oversight.

Sadly, this is part of a much broader pattern. We have seen this administration's attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts, their attacks on the National Endowment for the Humanities, their interference in museums, including the Smithsonian, their political litmus tests for cultural programming, and now the attempted transformation of the Kennedy Center into a monument to one man's personal brand.

The Kennedy Center is the only memorial in Washington dedicated to President John F. Kennedy, a President who believed that art belonged to the American people, a President who believed culture was a public good. This takeover, and the incompetence that has come with it, is an insult to that legacy.

The law is very clear: The Kennedy Center's name and mission are established by statute. Changing that requires an act of Congress, and I will do everything in my power to make sure this institution stays the way it is.

#### CONFRONTING THE DISEASE OF ADDICTION

(Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend President Trump for taking decisive action to confront one of the most devastating public health challenges that currently face our Nation, the disease of addiction.

With the launch of the Great American Recovery Initiative, President Trump is elevating our national response by coordinating Federal, State, and community resources. This action by President Trump will expand access to treatment, to prevention, to long-term recovery, and support millions of Americans and their families.

This initiative recognizes what addiction truly is, a chronic, treatable condition. This comprehensive effort reflects a shared American value that every life is worth saving and every individual struggling with addiction deserves a path to recovery.

According to data collected in 2023, nearly 5,000 Pennsylvanians lost their lives due to fatal drug overdoses. That means that across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we lost 14 lives each day to addiction.

Under the leadership of President Trump, I look forward to working with my colleagues here in Congress to support this initiative and ensure that it delivers real results for the families and those suffering with addiction across our country.

HAPPY 90TH BIRTHDAY TO SISTER PAULA DELGROSSO

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 90th birthday of Sister Paula DelGrosso.

Sister Paula's religious vocation began in the 1950s. After spending more than 30 years in education, she heard a different calling, a calling to serve her community in another way. She worked to establish the St. Vincent de Paul's Food for Families Soup Kitchen.

Sister Paula has worked with community leaders, service organizations, and supporters to operate the soup kitchen. Now, for more than three decades, she has lived her faith by feeding the hungry.

Mr. Speaker, as one of Sister Paula's many volunteers, I witnessed firsthand her commitment and her passion to serving her community. On her 90th birthday, I thank Sister Paula for her dedication and her devotion for those in need. I wish Sister Paula a happy birthday.

HONORING GEORGE LAKE

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor George Lake of Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, as the first recipient of the Pennsylvania Veteran Ag Entrepreneurship Award.

After completing his service in the U.S. Marine Corps, George took the responsibility of owning the Thistle Creek Farms in Warriors Mark.

George has transformed his family's 600-acre farm into a nationally recognized regenerative livestock operation which produces a premium beef brand.

Motivated to help owners of small farms succeed, George also devotes time to mentoring fellow beef farmers.

Mr. Speaker, I thank George Lake for his military service and offer congratulations on receiving the Pennsylvania Veteran Ag Entrepreneurship Award.

RECOGNIZING THE DEGOL FAMILY FOUNDATION

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 75th anniversary of the DeGol Organization, which is headquartered in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

The origins of the family-owned and -operated enterprise date to 1950 when