

□ 1150

HONORING LIFE AND LEGACY OF MARY SUE RICH

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of a remarkable public servant, trailblazer, and beloved member of our Ocala community, former Ocala councilmember Mary Sue Rich.

At the end of last year, at the age of 85, Mary Sue Rich passed away. Ms. Mary left behind a legacy that helped shape the city of Ocala for generations. She was a woman of courage and conviction, and her life reminds us that progress is often driven not by loud moments but by steady, faithful service over time.

In 1995, Mary Sue Rich made history when she became Ocala's first Black councilmember. At a time when representation mattered deeply and change did not come easily, she stepped forward with grace and determination. She was ready to serve her community, but more importantly, she opened doors.

Mary Sue Rich remained on the Ocala City Council until 2019, becoming the longest serving councilmember in the city's history. Her longevity was not just a matter of years but a testament to the trust that her community placed in her and the respect that she had earned through her leadership.

Ms. Mary was a mentor, a role model, and a living example of what it means to lead with integrity. She believed that progress comes when we bring people together, not when we divide them. Her leadership style was always rooted in listening, collaboration, and, of course, with a deep love for the city that she called home.

Her impact is not measured in titles alone, but it is reflected in the strengthened institutions that she helped guide, the voices that she elevated, and the countless residents whose lives were improved because she cared enough to serve.

I remember meeting her for the first time many years ago. I was a young, freshly elected Congresswoman, and she was just so gracious and kind. I recall thinking to myself how remarkable she was, someone whose tiny shoulders—she is not that tall—had been so small, but she carried so much. She was a force, a tiny titan, if you will.

That meeting that we had was actually a groundbreaking for a building that today bears her name. The dirt that we dug that day still sits on my desk.

As we extend our sincere condolences to her family, her friends, and the entire Ocala community, we mourn her passing, but we choose to use this as a moment to celebrate a life well lived and a legacy that will endure long after this moment.

Mr. Speaker, Mary Sue Rich's story reminds us why public service matters, and I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering and honoring the extraordinary life of Ms. Mary Sue Rich.

doesn't take up the time that prevents us from doing other things.

All of these things that people will say now in terms of why we can't do it, when we get the opportunity to by their standards, they will push all of these things aside and move forward. Well, I will be there with you. I am not asking you to be here with me, but I will be there with you. I will be there because it is the country, it is the Constitution, and it is the Republic that we must protect.

I promise you, friends, I will not be deterred. There is no need, not that anybody would, but there is no need to try and dissuade me. What happened in Venezuela was an act of war. The President doesn't have the authority to do that without consulting with the Congress. The Congress may very well conclude that you shouldn't do it. Maybe the Congress doesn't want to take over Venezuela. Maybe the Congress doesn't want to do this to provide the oil companies with greater revenues. Maybe the Congress has a different point of view. Your point of view is but one. The Congress has the right to have its point of view recognized as well. I must—others can do what they may. I must take this stand. I will take this stand.

This President will face Articles of Impeachment for his declaration of war based on his moral standards and his mind, based upon what he thinks he can do without congressional input. I will take a stand. I will bring the Articles of Impeachment.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MESSMER). Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities towards the President and direct their comments to the Chair.

RECOGNIZING ALACHUA COUNTY FIRE RESCUE CHIEF HAROLD THEUS

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Mrs. CAMMACK of Florida was recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an exceptional public servant, a trusted leader and a dear friend to myself and everyone around him, Alachua County Fire Chief Harold Theus.

Chief Theus was recently named Florida's Career Fire Chief of the Year, an honor that truly reflects his lifetime commitment to service, leadership, and his community.

For many years now, Chief Theus and I have worked side by side on issues that matter deeply to our Alachua County community. Whether it is public safety, emergency preparedness, disaster response, or ensuring that our first responders have the tools, training, and support they need to do their jobs safely and effectively, Harold is there. Through hurricanes, wildfires, medical emergencies, and moments of unimaginable loss, Chief Theus has been a steady and trusted presence, quite literally the definition of a phone call away.

Under his leadership, Alachua County Fire Rescue has set a standard for excellence, emphasizing readiness, innovation, and above all, care for the very people who wear the uniform every single day. Chief Theus understands that a strong department is built by investing in people, by mentoring young firefighters, prioritizing safety, and fostering a culture where every team member knows that they matter.

That kind of leadership doesn't happen by accident. It comes from lived experience, from showing up day after day, and from the understanding of the weight of responsibility that comes with the badge.

I also want to speak personally for a moment. As the wife of a first responder, I know the quiet sacrifices that families, particularly fire families, make, the missed holidays, the overtime shifts, the late-night calls, the constant awareness that danger is just always part of the job. Leaders like Chief Theus don't just protect communities, they look out for our fire families too. Chief Theus understands that behind every firefighter there is a family praying for his safe return.

Mr. Speaker, Florida's Career Fire Chief of the Year is simply not an award for operational excellence. It is a recognition of character. It honors someone who embodies integrity, resilience, and service above self. With Florida being the third most populous State in the Union, that is one heck of an achievement.

For the people of Alachua County, Chief Theus is more than just the fire chief. He is a leader in a time of crisis, a team builder, and man who has earned the trust of the community that he serves.

For me, he is a friend, someone whose counsel I value, whose commitment I admire, and whose example reminds us all of what public service is meant to be.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Fire Chief Harold Theus on a well-earned recognition and thank him for his service.

On behalf of the families that he protects, the firefighters that he leads, and the community that is safer because of his service, I thank Chief Theus. May his example continue to inspire the next generation of first responders.

REMEMBERING LIFE AND SERVICE OF JAMES BENNETT

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to remember the life and service of James Bennett, a devoted public servant from Baker County, Florida, whose life was tragically cut short. His sudden loss is a painful reminder for how fragile life can be and how deeply one's individual service can touch the lives of so many.

James Bennett was first elected as a Baker County commissioner in 2014, and he approached that responsibility with seriousness, humility, and an unwavering commitment to the people that he served.

He understood that local government is where public service is most personal. It is where decisions affect families, neighborhoods, and livelihoods very directly.

As a commissioner, he worked diligently to represent the interests of Baker County, always striving to do what he believed was right for his neighbors.

In addition to his service in Baker County, James was also the chief operating officer for JAXPORT. In that role he played a key part in supporting one of Florida's most vital economic assets. The port of Jacksonville is not only a driver of commerce and trade but a source of countless jobs, thousands of jobs, and the support system for families all across northeast Florida.

James understood the importance of that mission and brought his skills and leadership to bear in service of our State's economic future, and he always did it with a smile.

In fact, I will never forget on my last trip to JAXPORT, James put on a good smile, one that he probably would have busted into laughter if he could have, as I drove one of the cranes in a dress. For those that know about those cranes in our Nation's ports, they are very tall, and they tend to have some interesting components. He was a great sport showing me all of the latest things that they were doing at JAXPORT.

Beyond titles and positions, James will be remembered most for his character. He was somebody who believed deeply in public service, and he respected his fellow elected officials. More importantly, he listened to his constituents, the people who had elected him. He was always working to try to find a solution or an opportunity that would make Baker County stronger.

His passing is felt deeply by his family, his friends, his colleagues, and, of course, Baker County. They have lost a leader, a neighbor, a friend, someone who cared deeply about a place that we call home.

To his loved ones, I extend my deepest condolences and prayers for them during this very difficult time. No words will ever do justice for their pain and loss, but I hope they find comfort in knowing that James' life and his

service truly mattered, and that his contributions will not be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, today we pause to remember James Bennett not only for how he died but for how he lived: dedicated to service and dedicated to his community. His legacy is reflected in the work that he did and the people he served. May we honor his memory by continuing to serve with the same integrity, humility, and dedication that James demonstrated throughout his life and his career.

HONORING LIFE AND LEGACY OF FLOYD "SONNY" TILLMAN

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor the life and legacy of Floyd Tillman, or as most of us know him, "Sonny."

Sonny Tillman, a Gainesville native, a visionary entrepreneur, and a man who knew his barbecue was a deeply beloved member of our Florida community whose impact will be felt for generations to come. You can't drive through south Georgia or north Florida without driving past Sonny's BBQ.

In 1968, Sonny Tillman opened a small family-owned barbecue restaurant on Waldo Road in Gainesville, Florida. In fact, it is still there today. What began as a humble neighborhood gathering place where you have picnic benches became something that was greater than just a menu. It became something where people gathered and talked about values. It was a place where people would share not just a good meal but a great meal.

Sonny believed in good food made the right way. He believed in hard work, and he believed in treating customers like family. Those simple but powerful principles became the foundation of what we now know as Sonny's BBQ.

Just 9 years later, that single Gainesville restaurant grew into not just a small franchise but a big franchise, and today, Sonny's BBQ is now recognized nationwide for its signature barbecue, southern hospitality, and commitment to quality. Yet despite the company's growth and success, Sonny never lost sight of what mattered most: community, family, kindness, and connection.

Sonny's story is a powerful reminder of the American Dream that with determination, integrity, grit, and heart, one person can create something lasting that brings people together. Those who knew him remember him not just for his vision but for his warmth, his generosity, his ability to make people feel welcomed and valued. It became more than a business. He created a place where families gathered, where momentous occasions took place, friendships were formed, and memories were made.

On behalf of Florida's Third Congressional District, I want to extend my deepest condolences to Sonny's family, to his friends, and all those that were touched by his life. We are so grateful for his contributions, more proud than you can imagine to call him one of our own, and committed to remembering the example that he said.

May we honor Sonny's memory by carrying forward the values that he lived by: hard work, generosity, grit, and love for community and some good barbecue.

□ 1200

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF BILL QUINLAN, METEOROLOGIST

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the life and legacy of former TV20 Chief Meteorologist Bill Quinlan.

Bill joined the TV20 family in 1996 and dedicated 27 years of service to the north central Florida community. For many families in our region, Bill was more than just a weatherman. He was a familiar face that became part of people's childhoods, like my own husband's. He grew up watching Bill every single day.

Quite literally, generations of viewers have grown up watching Bill. They trusted his forecast before school and planned weekends around his predictions.

Beyond the forecast, Bill was a trusted voice and steady presence during moments of uncertainty. In a region and neighborhood like ours, which is often impacted by severe storms, hurricanes, and extreme weather, meteorologists play a vital role in protecting lives and property. They are educators, scientists, and public servants who help communities prepare, respond, and recover.

Bill was unique because he not only embraced that responsibility with great care, knowing that his work was making a real difference for families across north central Florida, but he was committed to accuracy, warm professionalism, and friendly public service and mentorship.

Bill helped our neighborhoods stay informed for nearly three decades. When storms threatened, Bill's steady demeanor and calm smile brought reassurance and clarity to countless households.

Bill also understood that mentorship was important. He took pride in explaining complex weather systems in ways that were accessible and engaging, inspiring curiosity and understanding among viewers of all ages. Many young people who watched him on TV grew up knowing that Bill was a trusted teacher and role model, and some went on to pursue that interest in science and meteorology because of him. I know today my husband has a weather app on his phone because of Bill.

We honor Bill today not only for his remarkable career but for his compassion and dedication to the people around him. He took great pride in educating viewers, and he inspired many young people. His legacy will continue across our community for years to come, leaving a lasting impact on his colleagues, viewers, the TV20 family, and friends alike.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF CONGRESSMAN DOUG LAMALFA

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to honor the life and service of

Doug LaMalfa. He was not just a Member of Congress, but, more importantly, he was a farmer, a husband, a father, and my friend. He was a man whose character was shaped long before he ever set foot in Washington.

Doug LaMalfa was about as salt of the earth as you can get. For him, farming was not just something he talked about in speeches. It wasn't a paycheck. It was something that he lived. For the last few days, I have been looking back on our text exchanges and have watched and rewatched the videos that he sent me from the tractor while he was harvesting rice and being a bit of a goofball.

That was what was unique about Doug. He understood the dignity of hard work because he did it himself. Long days, unpredictable seasons, and quiet responsibility of caring for land and providing for others formed the foundation of who he was. That background grounded him. It gave him patience, perspective, and a deep respect for the people who keep this country fed and moving forward.

The same principles he embodied as a farmer and steward of the land were in the same sense of stewardship that guided him here in public service. He approached leadership the way a farmer approaches the land: thoughtfully, practically, and with an eye toward the future. He believed that you leave things better than you found them, Mr. Speaker, not just for today, but for the next generation.

I truly believe that what set Doug apart was his kindness. Every time I saw him, I was greeted with a loud and booming—if you knew Doug, Mr. Speaker, then you know it was going to be a booming voice: “Hey, KAT CAMMACK.” He also made a point to say my name right, and he put an emphasis on the “mack” because he was always flustered and frustrated when he would hear other people say it and couldn’t say my name right.

When he wasn’t doing that, he was asking me about how Big Daddy Garlits was doing, the drag racing titan who calls my district home, or how sweet baby Auggie, my newborn daughter, was doing. He was always teeing up some goofy story or taking a funny selfie, and it was those same goofy and wholesome selfies that have dotted the photo album on my phone for the last 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, those who knew him best will tell you that his compassion was quiet but genuine. He listened more than he spoke, and he treated people with respect, regardless of who they were or where they came from. Whether he was meeting with a constituent, helping a neighbor, or working alongside our colleagues, Doug never forgot that public service was about people, not politics.

When the news broke about his passing, a constituent of his wrote a note to me, sharing a story of how she had just lost her husband and was in shock.

She had ordered a flag to be flown over the Capitol in honor of the birthday of a friend who had been with her through the loss of her husband, but due to a mixup, her flag had never arrived. She said she had “given up on it.”

Fast forward to a Sunday morning. She answered a knock at her door. She was in her PJs and a hoodie, and she found Doug LaMalfa standing there, flag in hand. He explained it had been returned to his office due to a mixup in the mail, but he knew that she would want it. She was so impressed that not only did he get her the flag, but that he delivered it personally and on a weekend.

What Congressman does that?

While it seems like the exception today, things like that were more of a rule for Doug. His kindness wasn’t performative. It showed up in small moments like taking the time to return a phone call or show up on a Sunday to deliver a flag, checking in on families during hard times and seasons, or just standing up for communities that often feel unseen or unheard.

Doug LaMalfa carried the values of rural America into the Halls of Congress: faith, hard work, generosity, and resilience. He never lost sight of who he was or where he came from, and because of that, he never lost sight of whom he served.

Today, Mr. Speaker, and hopefully every day, we remember a farmer who answered the call to serve his country, a public servant who led with integrity, and a man whose legacy will live on in the lives he touched. May we honor him by carrying forward those same values of caring deeply, working hard, and treating one another with the kindness that he so naturally gave, because Doug would want it that way.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

EXAMINING FRAUD IN CALIFORNIA

(Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 3, 2025, Mr. KILEY of California was recognized for 30 minutes.)

Mr. KILEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment this morning to examine the biggest fraud scandal in the history of California and probably in the history of the United States, and that was the fraud in unemployment benefits that occurred in California during the COVID years, amounting to a minimum of \$32 billion—\$32 billion.

It is easy to kind of throw these numbers around and lose sight of what they really mean, so just to put that in perspective, that was one-half of the education budget in California at the time, and it is more than the entire State budget of the vast majority of States in the country.

□ 1210

Now, the reason that this scandal bears scrutiny right now is threefold.

First, a State audit just found 2 weeks ago that this unemployment fraud in California is ongoing to this day continuing to cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

Second, the Senate still has not passed a bill that we passed in the House to hold some of these fraudsters accountable by extending the statute of limitations.

Third, the Newsom administration, perhaps sensing the political peril following the events in Minnesota, has come out and absurdly tried to deny responsibility for this scheme, for this scandal, and even more absurdly tried to blame the Federal Government for it.

I want to go through exactly what happened because I believe it is important to show why taxpayers were so thoroughly defrauded and to assure that this does not continue to happen going forward.

The reality is that the fraud that occurred in California took place despite the repeated warnings of the Federal Government, and it was uncovered not by State officials but, rather, by local prosecutors.

On November 23, 2020, a group of nine county prosecutors disclosed what they called the most serious significant fraud of taxpayer funds in California history. Now, at the time, they said they could only prove \$1 billion. So \$1 billion was already the biggest fraud of taxpayer dollars in California history. Now we know that it was at the very least \$32 billion.

Contrary to what the Newsom administration is trying to say now, at the time, the district attorney of Sacramento County, Anne Marie Schubert, said: “We have asked and implored the Governor to turn the spigot off.” She said the Governor’s Employment Development Department was not doing commonsense things, like cross-checking claims with prison rolls, something that the vast majority of other States were doing and that the Federal Government had advised.

She said this made the scheme “relatively easy.” She called the Governor’s response slow and nonexistent. She advised Governor Newsom to “look to other States for solutions.”

The district attorney of Fresno County, Lisa Smittcamp, said: “(Newsom) did nothing until the elected district attorneys brought it to the media.” She added that she did not think the State has a handle on it. Those were comments made back in November of 2020.

The following January, the State auditor came out with a report that laid forward in very precise detail exactly how significant the failures of the Newsom administration were, specifically with their unemployment office, known as the EDD.

A heading in that audit said: “Significant Weaknesses in EDD’s Approach to Fraud Prevention Have Led