

Board 12 and the Wakefield Taxpayers Alliance.

The legacy of Dr. King is carried down to this day by Toba and all those who gather this weekend who, in the words of Dr. King, are judged and appreciated not merely by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

Mr. Speaker, from the floor of the House of Representatives, I salute Toba LaCrown and the African American Association of Co-op City.

**HONORING COLONEL CHARLES
"CHUCK" DeBELLEVUE**

(Mrs. BICE of Oklahoma was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mrs. BICE. Mr. Speaker, I stand before you, along with my colleague, Representative KEITH SELF of the Texas Third Congressional District, to honor Colonel Chuck DeBellevue, United States Air Force retired, an American patriot whose extraordinary courage, leadership, and lifetime of service reflect the highest ideals of our Nation and the United States Air Force.

On September 9, 1972, then-Captain DeBellevue and his F-4 Phantom II crewmate, Captain John Madden, shot down two north Vietnamese MiG-19s. These victories marked DeBellevue's fifth and sixth aerial kills, making him the highest scoring American ace of the Vietnam war.

Over the course of his career, Colonel DeBellevue flew 220 combat missions, including 96 over North Vietnam. He is credited with the destruction of six North Vietnamese jet fighters in aerial combat, making him America's leading ace of that conflict and the last American ace to serve on Active Duty. His actions in combat remain among the most distinguished examples of aerial valor in the United States military history.

His decorations include the Air Force Cross, the Service's second highest award for valor, along with three Silver Stars, three Legions of Merit, six Distinguished Flying Crosses, and eighteen Air Medals.

Colonel DeBellevue earned a bachelor of science degree in physics from the University of Southwestern Louisiana and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force.

Following undergraduate navigator training and an initial assignment flying the F-4 Phantom II at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, he was deployed to Southeast Asia, joining the 555th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand.

Following his combat tour, Colonel DeBellevue attended undergraduate pilot training and became a full-fledged F-4 pilot. He subsequently served with distinction in multiple fighter squadrons, including the 335th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, the 8th Tactical Fight-

er Squadron at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, and the 43rd Tactical Fighter Squadron at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska. His staff assignments included service at the Pentagon, Alaskan Air Command, and the Fifth Air Force.

After his promotion to colonel in 1985, he attended the Army War College and held senior leadership positions across the Air Force.

In his final Active-Duty assignment, he was commander of Air Force ROTC Detachment 440 at the University of Missouri, Columbia, where he continued to shape and mentor future officers.

Colonel DeBellevue is a command pilot with more than 3,000 flying hours, including over 550 hours in combat. In 1972, he and the other Vietnam war aces were awarded the MacKay Trophy and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Armed Forces Award. He retired from Active Duty February 1 of 1998, after 30 years of honorable service.

Following his retirement from the Air Force, Colonel DeBellevue continued his commitment to service through work in the aerospace industry, higher education, and veteran advocacy. I am proud to say he currently resides in Oklahoma's Fifth Congressional District, which I represent. He serves on the boards of the Dale K. Graham Veterans Foundation and the Air Warrior Courage Foundation and is president of the American Fighter Aces Association. In 2023, he was honored as River Rat of the Year and named the Air Warrior Courage Foundation Humanitarian of the Year.

Colonel DeBellevue's lifetime of service has been recognized with numerous honors, including selection as Outstanding Alumnus of the University of Louisiana in 2008, introduction to the Louisiana Aviation Hall of Fame in 2011, and the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame in 2012. In 2014, he was the recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal as a member of the American Fighter Aces.

Colonel DeBellevue and his wife, Sally, have raised a family grounded in service, integrity, and love of country.

Mr. Speaker, Colonel Charles "Chuck" DeBellevue represents the very best of the United States Air Force and of those Americans who have answered our Nation's call with uncommon valor and lifelong dedication. It is fitting that his service and legacy be entered into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD so that future generations may know and be inspired by his example.

□ 1030

RISING HOUSING COSTS

(Mrs. SYKES of Ohio was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mrs. SYKES. Mr. Speaker, I often say that while my name may be on the ballot, we are all going to Congress together. Families in Ohio's 13th Congressional District and all across the

country are telling us that housing costs are rising faster than wages, making it hard to keep a roof over their heads.

Today, I rise to bring an issue that plagues my community and the entire country, which is the rising cost of housing.

In my district alone, over one hundred thousand households rent their homes. The median renter household income is just above \$40,000 a year, yet the median rent is more than \$1,000 per month. That means housing costs are often the largest part of a monthly budget, and this is even before groceries, childcare, or healthcare.

It is not just renters who are feeling the squeeze. Homeowners are feeling the squeeze, too. The median home value in Ohio's 13th District is about \$228,000. That may sound modest compared to national prices, especially for those of you on the coasts, but property taxes, insurance, utilities, and repairs add up fast. With aging homes and data centers driving up the cost of utilities, people are feeling the crunch.

For families with a mortgage, monthly housing costs average nearly \$1,500, and even those who have paid off their mortgage face rising property taxes and repair costs that strain household budgets.

For families trying to buy their first home, the challenge is steeper, because mortgage rates may have dipped below 6 percent, but high prices and limited inventory keep homeownership out of reach for many in my district. We cannot ignore the inequities baked into the system.

In Ohio's 13th District, the homeownership rate overall is nearly 69 percent, but for Black families, it drops to just 37 percent, dropping by nearly half. That gap reflects generations of barriers we still have a responsibility to address, like redlining and restrictive covenants.

For some families, rising costs lead to housing instability or homelessness. That is why, last November, I pressed the Department of Housing and Urban Development to protect Federal funding and homelessness prevention programs in Summit and Stark Counties. These continuum of care dollars support nearly 2,700 beds in my district for families, veterans, and young people who need a safe place to sleep. Any cut could disrupt services that people depend on and, most importantly, keep them without a roof over their head.

We also have to confront the root causes of this crisis. Large corporate investors are buying up single-family homes, driving up prices and rents, and locking families out of homeownership.

That is why, last summer, I introduced the HOMES Act, which cracks down on investors buying 50 or more single-family homes, shines a light on corporate ownership and rental practices, and makes sure local families, not profit-seeking investors, get first

access to homeownership. People simply cannot compete with these for-profit corporations, and every family deserves a place to call home.

Just last week, President Trump acknowledged the same problem and called on Congress to address it. On this issue, it seems we may finally all be reading from the same page.

I encourage my colleagues to support the HOMES Act and see its swift passage, but we also need to build homes, too. Supply simply has not met the demand. That is why I secured Federal funding for the East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation to help expand affordable housing, revitalize neighborhoods, and create jobs. Increasing supply is essential if we want housing prices to come down.

As chair of the New Democrat Coalition's Affordable Housing Task Force, I helped develop a housing action plan with more than 20 recommendations to increase housing supply, reform zoning and permitting, strengthen Federal incentives, grow the construction workforce, and improve transparency.

Mr. Speaker, housing is the foundation of opportunity. Homeownership is the primary way in which families build wealth. When housing is affordable and stable, families can plan, save, and build a future. When it is not, life becomes harder. Rents are too high. Mortgages are still out of reach for far too many families. Property taxes and repairs are stretching household budgets. Homelessness programs that protect our most vulnerable neighbors must be preserved.

Mr. Speaker, we have to get serious about housing and focus our attention on lowering the cost of housing and keeping housing accessible to everyone. The American Dream depends on it.

Every family deserves a safe and affordable place to call home, and this House has a responsibility to help make that possible. Until housing costs come down, Congress has a lot more work to do. I look forward to working with this body on behalf of my constituents and across the country to work to reduce housing costs so everyone can live their American Dream wherever they choose to call home.

RECOGNIZING AND THANKING NATE SOULE

(Mr. LAWLER of New York was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and thank someone whose impact on my office and on me personally cannot be overstated, my chief of staff, Nate Soule, as he concludes his service to New York's 17th Congressional District.

When I first ran for the New York State Assembly in 2020, before there was a congressional office or a seat in this Chamber, Nate took a leap of faith and helped build a campaign from the ground up. Together, we delivered a

victory many said was impossible, defeating an incumbent in a district with a 2-1 Democratic enrollment advantage. That race was the foundation for everything that has followed.

In Albany, Nate served as my chief of staff and helped lead one of the most active offices in the State assembly. Our team delivered real results for the Hudson Valley and built a reputation for being accessible, responsive, and relentless when it came to constituent services.

When I was elected to Congress, Nate once again stepped up, first as deputy chief of staff and communications director and now as my chief of staff. Through every transition, he has brought discipline, sound judgment, and an unwavering commitment to the people we serve.

Nate understands that public service is not about titles or headlines. It is about doing the work, telling the truth, and delivering for the people who sent us here. His counsel is steady and measured, his loyalty unwavering, and, above all, his friendship cherished.

Through Nate's vision, his hard work, and his invaluable leadership, our office has not only been more effective but has set a standard for what public service can and should be. I have no doubt that he will bring the same integrity and dedication as he embarks on a new chapter. Doina and I wish Nate and his wife, Lauren, the very best.

HONORING THE LIFE OF ANTHONY "TONY" DEFECIANI

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Anthony "Tony" DeFeciani, who passed away peacefully on December 23, 2025.

Born and raised in Haverstraw, Tony was a proud New Yorker, attending Haverstraw High School and participating in the marching band, where he was voted the most musical in his senior year.

Following graduation, Tony enlisted in the United States Navy and proudly served during the Korean war. He was awarded the Bronze Star after more than 30 years of service. Returning home, Tony worked at Bear Mountain, Lederle Laboratories, and New York Telephone/Verizon, retiring after 30 years of professional service.

Tony also gave back to his community as a volunteer firefighter with the Haverstraw Fire Department Relief Hose Company No. 3 for 60 years, serving as fire chief.

Tony was an avid gardener and fisherman, built his own boat, and ran Rainbow Gardens, known locally for its tomatoes.

A devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, Tony shared 66 years of wonderful marriage with his beloved wife, Joan. Together, they raised six children. He cherished every moment with his family and community and will be deeply missed.

HONORING LIFE OF THEODORE SCHULTZ

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Theodore

"Ted the Great" Schultz, who passed away peacefully on January 10, surrounded by his family.

Born in Nyack, Ted was raised on his grandfather's farm in Pomona and attended Spring Valley High School, where he earned the rank of Eagle Scout. A talented athlete, he wrestled and played football, earning the nickname "Tank," and went on to attend Illinois Wesleyan University, where he played football for 4 years and later earned his MBA from Washington University.

It was at Illinois Wesleyan that Ted met his wife, Carol. They settled in Pearl River, New York, where they raised their children, Traci and Craig, before later moving to Stony Point.

Ted built a remarkable career at Ted Schultz Auto Sales, relocating the dealership to Nanuet and growing it into a nationally ranked Ford dealership while earning numerous President's Awards.

Beyond work, Ted enjoyed time with friends, boating on the Hudson River, and spending time with his grandchildren. His legacy lives on through the lessons he passed on to his family, his friends, and the many lives he touched. May he rest in peace.

RECOGNIZING S.W. JOHNSON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the S.W. Johnson Fire Department in Rockland County on an incredible milestone of 150 years of dedicated service to our community.

Since its formation in 1876, S.W. Johnson has been 100 percent volunteer, embodying selflessness, courage, and a commitment to protecting our neighbors.

One of the department's most treasured pieces of history is its steamer, a Button manufactured in 1896 by the company that would become American LaFrance. This remarkable piece of equipment reflects the rich legacy and enduring dedication of S.W. Johnson and the fire service today.

I say thank you on behalf of New York's 17th Congressional District to the many firefighters who have given their time and bravery to this firehouse over the years. Congratulations to S.W. Johnson on 150 years of dedicated service. Their commitment, bravery, and volunteer spirit are an inspiration to us all.

HONORING OFFICER WILLIAM EPPERSON

(Mr. WEBER of Texas was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. WEBER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the courage and selfless service of Officer William Epperson of the Oyster Creek Police Department.

Mr. Speaker, on the night of November 17, 2025, Officer Epperson responded to a house fire with two residents trapped inside. Heavy smoke was pouring from the home, and the living area was only accessible by an exterior stairwell.