

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING PA-1'S HOMETOWN
HERO: ELLEN SARACINI

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary individual from Pennsylvania's First Congressional District—someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration that I recognize Ellen Saracini, one of our district's distinguished Hometown Heroes.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolades, but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their unwavering integrity, the strength of their character, and their steadfast commitment to the people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon which our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and, in doing so, call us all to higher standards of service and compassion. Ellen Saracini has embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

Ellen's determination has truly moved mountains and skies and transformed tragedy into triumph. On September 11, 2001, Captain Victor Saracini was piloting United Airlines Flight 175 when his plane was hijacked and deliberately flown into the South Tower of the World Trade Center. That day, Ellen lost her husband, her daughters lost their father, and their lives forever changed. Yet, from this unimaginable sorrow, Ellen emerged as a formidable force of strength and resilience. Over the past 23 years, she has channeled her grief into powerful advocacy for aviation safety, driven by a singular mission: to ensure that no other family endures the pain she has known. Her tireless efforts have redefined air travel safety standards and ensured our pilots, crews, and passengers are safe in the skies.

Since joining Congress, it has been my profound honor to partner with Ellen in that fight. In 2018, we achieved a milestone by securing my amendment in the FAA Reauthorization, mandating secondary barriers on all newly manufactured aircraft. Although we celebrated that victory, industry resistance stalled the retrofitting of existing fleets, but Ellen, with her unwavering spirit and relentless drive, would not accept defeat. We doubled down on our efforts, and earlier this year, the Saracini Enhanced Aviation Safety Act became law as part of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization. This bipartisan legislation ensures secondary barriers are now required on all aircraft—new and existing—preventing future tragedies and saving countless lives. It was a victory forged by our shared resolve and Ellen's extraordinary perseverance, strength, and courage.

Ellen's determination to create lasting change did not stop there. With the same strength and resolve that carried her through unimaginable loss, she turned her grief into

action once again—this time to heal our community. Ellen led the charge to establish the Garden of Reflection 9/11 Memorial, a sanctuary built to honor the 18 Bucks County residents and the 2,973 souls lost on that tragic day. Today, this beautiful 2.5-acre memorial is Pennsylvania's official 9/11 memorial and draws visitors from across our country. It serves as a place of healing, reflection, and unity—a lasting tribute only made possible through Ellen's unshakable resolve.

Ellen exemplifies the profound power of resilience, strength, and purposeful action. Her unwavering commitment has revolutionized aviation safety and provided solace to countless families, demonstrating that even in our darkest hours, we can find light and enact meaningful change.

In times of uncertainty, it is the work of individuals like Ellen Saracini that reminds us of the strength of the human spirit. Today, we honor Ellen Saracini not just for their remarkable deeds, but for who she is—a true hero, in every sense of the word.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Ellen Saracini for her extraordinary service. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this exceptional individual, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May their example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.

HONORING THE CAREER OF
MARGARET MIMS

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the career of Sheriff Margaret Mims after 42 years of valiant leadership and public service.

A true call to service, Margaret was a single mother working as a student aide at a local high school when she received a call in the night. On the other end was the incoming Police Chief of Kerman who shared his intentions to hire the city's first female officer. Recognizing the opportunity, Margaret applied for the position and her career in law enforcement began in January of 1980 when she was sworn in by her father to be a police officer for the City of Kerman.

In 1983, she then joined the Fresno County Sheriff's Office as a Deputy Sheriff. Following her move, Margaret never looked back as she made her way up the ranks of Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, and Assistant Sheriff, becoming the first woman to achieve each position until she was finally elected to Sheriff in 2006.

Upon taking the Oath on her grandmother's Bible, Mims became Fresno County's first female elect as well and has now been re-elected three times since. Over her 16 years as

acting Sheriff, Margaret has worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of both her officers and the residents of Fresno County. Keen on providing stability within the force, Sheriff Mims' leadership approach has allowed her to carry out this task through the good times and the bad.

Additionally, Sheriff Mims has gone above and beyond her call to duty to not just defend residents but defend their constitutional rights as well. A voice of reason, she has taken the discussion of immigration reform and sanctuary state status all the way to the White House, meeting with both President Obama and President Trump during their terms. She has also worked diligently with county departments such as the Fresno County Board of Supervisors and the County Administrative Office to ensure the voices and concerns of the public are being heard.

Sheriff Mims has transpired the expectations of a Sheriff and empowered the community in the process. In recognition of her efforts, she was the recipient of the Fresno Exchange Club's Top Cop award in 1998, was selected to Fresno County's Top Ten Professional Women of the Year in 1999, and received the 2001 Breaking the Glass Ceiling Award from the National Center for Women in Policing.

Sheriff Mims is happily married to her husband, Gary, and they have two children and two grandchildren. Her retirement is well-deserved and will be spent enjoying her family and especially her grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Sheriff Margaret Mims for her outstanding public service and tireless dedication to the community. May we continue to be inspired by her service.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF
TERENCE "BOOBOO" RATCHFORD

HON. RALPH NORMAN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. NORMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Terence Ratchford, BooBoo, who passed on July 26, 2024, and his years of incredible dedication and exemplary work for the 5th District of South Carolina. Raised in Gaffney, South Carolina by his parents Ruby Hemphill and Warren Ratchford. BooBoo always felt a deep connection with his community. He began volunteering his time at a young age, and was known to be willing to help "whenever and wherever."

As a child, he attended Limestone Missionary Baptist Church and later joined Greater Hope Ministries. He loved his church and his church family and displayed a deep commitment to serving it well. He was a leader in religious programs, choir, and Bible studies. His impact on the churches he attended will last for generations. As an active member of his community, BooBoo volunteered his time at many Chamber events, community service

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

projects. and at the Gaffney hospital. He served at the Peach Festival and played a large role in ensuring that the great city of Gaffney was celebrated each year.

BooBoo coached football at Gaffney High School for over 20 years. He was referred to as the "Get Back Coach" and was beloved by coaches and players alike. He also volunteered for the Blacksburg Middle School girl's basketball team and sponsored a wrestling event for the middle school.

BooBoo wore many different hats. He was a God-fearing man, a leader, friend, son, and coach. He served in each of these roles with kindness and joy. He will be deeply missed. Please join me in expressing my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to BooBoo.

RECOGNIZING PA-1'S HOMETOWN
HERO: CHRISTINE ELBERSON

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary individual from Pennsylvania's First Congressional District—someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration I recognize Christine Elberson, one of our district's distinguished Hometown Heroes.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolades but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their unwavering integrity, the strength of their character, and their steadfast commitment to the people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon which our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and, in doing so call us all to higher standards of service and compassion. Christine Elberson has embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

For the past seventeen years, Christine has taught tenth-grade social studies at Bensalem High School and has made it her mission to enrich her students' lives beyond the classroom. Known for her uncanny ability to develop meaningful relationships, Chrissy has mastered the balance of truly caring for her students while letting them know the importance of accountability. In her classroom, she instills confidence, inspires curiosity, provides enriching guidance, and challenges her students to seize every opportunity with a positive and joyful attitude. As her colleague Elena Toselli put it, "Christine is the teacher kids come back and visit time after time—she's one of those teachers who students will remember years from now because she made them feel valued and shaped who they were." Christine's efforts earned her the prestigious title of Bensalem's 2024 Teacher of the Year, a meaningful distinction voted upon by her peers, staff, and students. Christine demonstrates that it is teachers who are the architects of dreams, propelling our next generation of leaders toward success and greatness.

It is the work of individuals like Christine Elberson that reminds us of the power of the human spirit. Her service, given without expectation of recognition, stands as a testament to the belief that one individual dedication can

ripple through the lives of many, sparking change, fostering resilience, and inspiring hope. Today, we honor Christine Elberson not just for her remarkable deeds but for who she is—a true hero in every sense of the word.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Christine Elberson for her extraordinary service. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this exceptional individual, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May her example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.

FLORIDA'S 16TH CONGRESSIONAL
DISTRICT VETERAN COMMENDATION

HON. VERN BUCHANAN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a group of veterans for their military and community service.

Our veterans have sacrificed much in the defense of our Nation. Many of them retired their uniforms but continue their service by helping others in their community.

Three years ago, I established the 16th District Congressional Veteran Commendation to recognize the heroic wartime sacrifices and admirable peacetime community involvement of my constituents. These are exceptional Americans. I appreciate the opportunity to honor them for their service to the Nation and community.

An independent panel reviewed several nominations and chose the following thirty veterans for their wartime and post-military service:

Angel Alvarez of Riverview who served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam and Gulf Wars

Angelo Barnello Sr. of Riverview who served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II

Stephen Browning of Apollo Beach who served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War

Delford Connell of Sun City Center who served in the U.S. Navy during World War II
Geoffrey Cordes of Bradenton who served in the U.S. Army during the Gulf War

Angel Davila Lopez of Lithia who served in the U.S. Army during the Gulf War

Harry Demeza of Sun City Center who served in the U.S. Army during World War II
Jerry Estes of Wimauma who served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War

Brenda Gaines of Bradenton who served in the U.S. Army outside of war times

Jeffrey Gaines of Bradenton who served in the U.S. Army during the Gulf War

Lloyd Grable of Sun City Center who served in the U.S. Army during World War II

Dwain Hannah of Brandon who served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War

William Hodges of Sun City Center who served in the U.S. Air Force outside of war times

Carl Hunsinger of Palmetto who served in the U.S. Air Force during the Gulf War

Bruce Johnson of Valrico who served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War

William Kirkpatrick of Sun City Center who served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam and Gulf Wars

Jim Klocke of Bradenton who served in the U.S. Coast Guard during the Vietnam War

Maurice Lanouette of Sun City Center who served in the U.S. Army during World War II

Robert Marasco of Valrico who served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Gulf War

Thomas Moncrief of Apollo Beach who served in the U.S. Air Force outside of war times

Joseph Muhlberger of Valrico who served in the U.S. Air Force outside of war times

Jerry Neff of Bradenton who served in the U.S. Army outside of war times

Sean Powers of Bradenton who served in the U.S. Marine Corps outside of war times

Robert Putnam of Sun City Center who served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War

Thomas Reichard of Valrico who served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Gulf War and outside of war times

Gill Ruderman of Bradenton who served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War

Milton Shattuck of Bradenton who served in the U.S. Army during the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars

Vincent Spanicciati of Lakewood Ranch who served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Vietnam War

George Tamburello of Wimauma who served in the U.S. Army during World War II

Lonnie Vona of Valrico who served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam and Gulf Wars and outside of war times

HONORING THE LIFE OF MARY
KATHRYN PITMAN

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the remarkable life and enduring legacy of Mary Kathryn Pitman, a pioneering figure in the agricultural industry and a woman whose contributions have left an indelible mark on her community and beyond. With heavy hearts, we mourn the loss of Mary Pitman, who passed away on April 5, 2023, at the age of 72, leaving behind a profound impact on the world of organic poultry farming.

Mary Kathryn (Abbott) Pitman was born on February 16, 1951, in Hanford, California, to James Edward Abbott and Mary Imogene Staires. Her early years were shaped by a nurturing family environment, which instilled in her the values of hard work, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. After graduating from Hanford High School in 1969, Mary pursued her passion for education at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in early childhood education.

In 1973, she began her journey as the devoted wife of Richard Pitman, the son of Don Pitman, the founder of Pitman Family Farms. Their love story and shared vision for the future of the family business led to a union that would span nearly 50 years, as well as an extraordinary partnership in transforming the poultry industry.

Pitman Family Farms, established in 1954 by her father-in-law, Don Pitman, started as a

free-range chicken and turkey operation. Mary's husband, Richard Pitman, continued the family legacy, but the business faced challenges in finding markets outside the holiday seasons when turkeys were in high demand. In the late 1990s, Mary's son, David, attending her alma mater, proposed expanding the product line to include chickens alongside turkeys. Mary embraced the idea wholeheartedly and collaborated with her family to establish the organic label, "Mary's Chickens" and "Mary's Turkeys."

Mary was not only instrumental in expanding the family business but also played an essential role in shaping its core values. With a deep understanding of nutrition and a commitment to healthy living, she influenced the creation of the organic label, ensuring that the poultry products met stringent nutrition guidelines. Her passion for health and wellness stemmed from her own experiences and led her to advocate for avoiding sugars, preservatives, and food additives.

Under her guidance, Pitman Family Farms thrived and garnered recognition for its premium quality, free-range and organic poultry products. The family's dedication and Mary's innovative vision led to successful partnerships with renowned brands like Whole Foods, further expanding the reach and impact of their business.

Beyond her invaluable contributions to the poultry industry, Mary was an active member of her community and a devout follower of her faith. Her generosity and compassion touched the lives of many, as she selflessly supported various charitable causes and extended her kindness to those in need.

Mary is survived by her loving husband, Richard, and their three sons, David, Mark, and Benjamin, along with their wives. She cherished her role as a grandmother, leaving behind a legacy of ten adoring grandchildren who were the joy of her life.

As we honor the memory of Mary Kathryn Pitman, we reflect on the profound impact she had on the agricultural industry and her community. Her spirit of innovation, dedication to healthy living, and unwavering commitment to family and faith will continue to inspire generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life and legacy of Mary Kathryn Pitman. May her memory be a beacon of hope and inspiration, guiding us to uphold the values she so passionately embraced.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. H. MORGAN GRIFFITH

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I was present on the House floor during this vote series, but I was focused on discussing policy with leadership staff and unfortunately missed the vote. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 433 (H.R. 3724).

RECOGNIZING PA-1'S HOMETOWN HERO: JANET BRENNAN

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary individual from Pennsylvania's First Congressional District—someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration that I recognize Janet Brennan, one of our district's distinguished Hometown Heroes.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolade but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their unwavering integrity, the strength of their character, and their steadfast commitment to the people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon which our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and, in doing so, call us all to higher standards of service and compassion. Janet Brennan has embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

Over the past decade, Janet has made it her mission to better the lives of our local veteran community through her non-profit organization, Shamrock Reins, based in Pipersville. From a young age, Janet quickly discovered the unique ability of horses to connect with humans and their capacity to provide healing and comfort to those in need. Following a long career as an Emergency Department Trauma/Clinical Nurse, Janet sought a way to give back to those who sacrificed so much by stepping up to serve our community and country. And so, in 2014, she combined her love for horses and her desire to give back and founded Shamrock Reins. Today, Shamrock Reins helps our veterans, active duty and reserve service members, first responders, and the families of our fallen heroes take back the reins against PTSD and more. Through innovative equine therapy, our heroes and their families learn vital skills needed to assimilate back into civilian life, how to manage post-traumatic stress disorders, and receive therapy that heals both mental and physical injuries, at entirely no cost to them. Thanks to Janet, Shamrock Reins has become a beacon of hope that offers life-changing experiences for the heroes in our community.

In times of uncertainty, it is the work of individuals like Janet Brennan that reminds us of the strength of the human spirit. Their service, given without expectation of recognition, stands as a testament to the belief that one individual's dedication can ripple through the lives of many, sparking change, fostering resilience, and inspiring hope. Today, we honor Janet Brennan not just for her remarkable deeds but for who she is—a true hero in every sense of the word.

Mr. Speaker, it is through the work of people like Janet that our communities thrive, and our Nation grows stronger. Her actions remind us that progress is not forged in grand gestures, but in the cumulative power of selfless acts. She embodies the timeless American values of resilience, generosity, and compassion, showing us that the future is built by those who care deeply, act decisively, and give without hesitation.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Janet Brennan for her extraordinary service. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this exceptional individual, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May her example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.

HONORING MR. JOSEPH SCIAME ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT FROM ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

HON. THOMAS R. SUOZZI

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. SUOZZI. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the dedicated service of Joseph Sciamè, who retired in January after an extraordinary 61-year career at St. John's University in Queens, New York. Beginning as an undergraduate student in 1958, then as an employee in 1962, Joe devoted his life in service of the St. John's community. He leaves behind a legacy that will endure many lifetimes over.

Over the course of his six-decade career, Joe held numerous leadership positions in the university administration, including as the Vice President for the Office of Community Relations and, most notably, as the inaugural Vice President for Financial Aid. He has also previously served as the Chairman of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. In these roles, Joe has expanded opportunities for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds to receive a world-class education. Having personally awarded millions of dollars in financial aid to thousands of students, many of whom would otherwise not have access to a college education, Joe's impact has been nothing short of life changing for so many.

In addition to his lifelong devotion to the St. John's community, Joe served our country in the U.S. Army from 1964 to 1967, and was awarded the Army Commendation Medal. I speak for a grateful Nation in thanking him for his courageous service.

As the Advisory Board Chair of the Italian Cultural Center and a National/State President Emeritus of the Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America, Joe has been a proud champion for the Italian-American community and a devoted leader in the Catholic community for his entire life.

Joe's remarkable leadership and boundless empathy will continue to inspire all those who were lucky enough to call him a mentor. He is the type of once-in-a-lifetime academic administrator that a student dreams of meeting, that a parent wishes for their child to encounter, and that a colleague strives to emulate. Thanks to his lifetime of work, Joe has left the Queens community, our country, and the world a better place than he found it.

Earlier this year, Joe was awarded the St. John's University Medal of Honor, which is the highest honor the university can bestow upon an alumnus—a fitting and well-earned accomplishment.

"I hope it's been a life well lived," he remarked earlier this year. Well, Joe, it certainly

has. On behalf of our entire community, I thank Joe for his lifetime of service.

RECOGNIZING POMONA DEPUTY
CHIEF OF POLICE CHRISTIAN HSU

HON. NORMA J. TORRES

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mrs. TORRES of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Christian Hsu and his 30 years of public service and dedication to the City of Pomona. The calling to be a police officer is an incredibly selfless and important vocation of public service. Those who risk their lives for the good of the community are worthy of the highest respect and appreciation.

Deputy Chief Hsu joined the Pomona Police Department in 1994 after graduating from the University of California, Irvine, where he worked several years at its campus police department. He also interned at the Laguna Beach Police Department. Throughout his distinguished career, Chief Hsu served as Corporal, Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Captain. He was appointed as Deputy Chief in May of 2020. In that role, he assisted the Chief of Police in the day-to-day operation of the department.

Additionally, Chief Hsu holds Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, Supervisory and Management POST certificates. He has also attended many distinguished trainings including the Sherman Block Supervisory Leadership Institute, LAPD Leadership Program, California Police Chiefs' Executive Leadership Institute, POST Command College, and POST Executive Development.

This November, Chief Hsu is officially retiring. I hope that he gets to rest and enjoy time with his family. We are grateful for his service to our community.

For his outstanding accomplishments, it is my honor to recognize Chief of Police Christian Hsu. His years of civic service and commitment to the city and the people of Pomona are worthy of the highest commendation.

HONORING THE CAREER OF KERRI
L. DONIS

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the career of Chief Kerri L. Donis for 27 years of her fearless leadership and courageous service to the Fresno Fire Department.

Born and raised in Moline, Illinois, Kerri First came to the Central Valley on a scholarship to play softball at Fresno State, where her leadership abilities were first realized. While pursuing her bachelor's degree in exercise science, Kerri also led the Bulldogs to three runner-up finishes in the Women's Softball College World Series from 1987 to 1990. For her efforts, Kerri was named a Top Dog Alumna by the Fresno State Alumni Association in 2008.

Following her collegiate success, Mrs. Donis became a fitness trainer where one of her clients happened to be the wife of the deputy

chief of the Fresno Fire Department at the time and first sparked the idea for her to become a firefighter, based on its similarities to sports. Not long after, Kerri answered the call to serve and was hired as a firefighter for the City of Fresno in 1996. She held this position for 4 years before swiftly being promoted up the ranks to Firefighter Specialist in 2000, Fire Captain in 2001, and Deputy Chief in 2004. Throughout these positions, Kerri served various divisions of the department, including Fire Prevention, Fire Investigations, and Operations.

It then wasn't until 2013 that the position of Interim Fire Chief presented itself to Mrs. Donis. Not long after, in January 2014, she accepted the permanent position of Fire Chief, making herself the first woman to hold the position in the department's 145-year history. Unprecedented, Kerri proved to be a leader of men and an inspiration to women in a profession where women make up only 4 percent of the nationwide force.

As acting Chief of the Fresno Fire Department, Kerri L. Donis proudly served the greater Fresno community and continues to support diversity and equal opportunity throughout the City of Fresno Fire Department. In effort to do so, she created the Girls Empowerment Camp (GEC), which introduces fire service careers to young women and provides them with hands-on training from local, active-duty firefighters. Additionally, Chief Donis has also worked tirelessly to fundraise for other Fresno Fire Chief Foundation programs that provide support for burn victims, promote safety for children, and provide education and resources for firefighters.

Throughout her career, Chief Donis has earned numerous distinctions such as holding a Master of Science in Organizational Leadership and becoming a credentialed California State Fire Marshal Chief Officer, Chief Fire Officer (CFO), and Executive Fire Officer (EFO). Under her leadership, the Department has grown to 327 sworn firefighting personnel, 26 sworn nonsafety personnel, and 49 civilian positions for a total of 402 FFD members today. However, Chief Donis will be remembered most for her selfless acts and consistently putting the safety of her firefighters and community above all else.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Chief Kerri Donis for her retirement. May we continue to be inspired by her service.

RECOGNIZING PA-1'S HOMETOWN
HERO: HEERA KALIDINDI

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary individual from Pennsylvania's First Congressional District—someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration that I recognize Heera Kalidindi, one of our district's distinguished Hometown Heroes.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolades but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their un-

wavering integrity, the strength of their character, and their steadfast commitment to the people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon which our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and, in doing so, call us all to higher standards of service and compassion. Heera has embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

A rising leader, Heera has devoted her time and talents to numerous initiatives, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to service and excellence. From serving as a leader for Youth 4 Unity to her service as a member of Girl Scout Troop 21638, President of the UNICEF Club, and Lead Volunteer for Central Bucks Cares Volunteer Teens, Heera's leadership shines across various platforms. While interning in my office, Heera immersed herself in the Service Academy Nominations process, which sparked her passion and led to my great honor of nominating her to both the United States Naval Academy and the United States Military Academy at West Point. This fall, she officially began her service as a Cadet at West Point, embarking on a journey to serve our Nation with distinction. Most recently, Heera premiered her powerful short documentary, "Veterans Voices: Female-Veterans Through History," a poignant tribute to the courageous women who have worn our Nation's uniform. Heera's journey is just beginning, and her impact already reverberates throughout our community. She is an inspiring example of leadership, dedication, and the power of service—setting a high standard for all who aspire to make a difference.

Mr. Speaker, it is through the work of people like Heera Kalidindi that our communities thrive, and our Nation grows stronger. Her actions remind us that progress is not forged in grand gestures, but in the cumulative power of selfless acts. She embodies the timeless American values of resilience, generosity, and compassion, showing us that the future is built by those who care deeply, act decisively, and give without hesitation.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Heera for her extraordinary service. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this exceptional individual, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May her example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.

HONORING FRED WALSH

HON. WILLIAM R. KEATING

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. KEATING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the life of Fred Walsh. Born on February 4, 1949, to parents Helen and John Walsh, Fred was raised in Arlington, Massachusetts, alongside his sisters, Susan and Judith, and his twin brother, John. After graduating from Arlington High School in 1967, Fred went on to receive his bachelor's degree in history from the University of New Hampshire and his master's degree in school counseling from Suffolk University. Following in his father's footsteps, Fred taught and coached

football at a local high for several years, before joining a midsized construction company.

Unfortunately, Fred's health forced him to leave construction after he and his twin were diagnosed with Alpha-1 in 1989. Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency is a genetic condition that increases a person's risk of developing lung and liver disease. Although there is currently no cure for Alpha-1, Fred always remained a vocal advocate for advancing research on the condition and supporting those also impacted by Alpha-1.

Over the years, Fred was deeply involved in both the Alpha-1 Foundation and AlphaNet, sister organizations co-founded in 1995 by Fred's twin, John. AlphaNet provides educational resources and health management services to members of the Alpha-1 community by connecting them with trained AlphaNet coordinators who also have Alpha-1. The Alpha-1 Foundation is a nonprofit focused on advocacy and advancing research on the condition. For many years, Fred served on the Executive Board of the Alpha-1 Foundation, including in the role of Vice Chair, and worked as an AlphaNet coordinator for nearly three decades.

After John passed in 2017, Fred worked to have legislation introduced in his brother's honor. The John W. Walsh Alpha-1 Home Infusion Act would allow for Medicare coverage of at-home augmentation therapy for Alpha-1 patients. For over three decades, Fred was a tireless champion of the Alpha-1 community, helping recently diagnosed members navigate the condition and continuously fighting to find a cure and improve treatment options.

Sadly, we lost Fred too soon on September 29, 2024, at the age of 75. Above all, Fred was a devoted husband to his wife, Pamela, and father to their daughters, Chase and Kailey. Fred's commitment to helping the Alpha-1 community throughout his time with the Alpha-1 Foundation and AlphaNet serves as an example to all, and his legacy will carry on through all those who had the great fortune of knowing and working alongside him.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to honor Fred Walsh, and I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing his lifetime of advocacy and dedication to supporting others with Alpha-1.

HONORING A CENTURY OF SERVICE AND SACRIFICE BY THE PARISH AT THE BLESSED SACRAMENT CHURCH IN THE EAST END

HON. SYLVIA R. GARCIA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Ms. GARCIA of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a century of service and sacrifice by the parish at the Blessed Sacrament Church in the East End, as they celebrate 100 years of the building's dedication this month. The church's origins are rooted in humble beginnings. In 1904 and 1905, families gathered under tents in the hot Houston summers, holding services with little more than their faith and determination. They lacked a building or enough people to appear on a Catholic census. Yet, their vision was clear—to create a lasting spiritual home for the community. By the end of the decade, they would establish a

modest building as the burgeoning young pastor, Father J. Schnetzer, sought to assemble a parish worthy of significance. By 1923, the parish had grown beyond its original space, and a new church was needed to meet the demands of the growing community. As the new church was erected, words from the Apostle Peter were carved into its cornerstone: "As you come to him, the living Stone . . . you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house." Bishop Byrne dedicated the new church on October 12, 1924. This cornerstone of faith did more than hold up walls—it upheld a community. After the Second Vatican Council, the introduction of Spanish services opened the doors wider, ensuring that the Blessed Sacrament Church could truly reflect the needs of the Latino families who had come to call the East End home. As it had a half-century earlier, the church grew inside those brick walls as the faith grew.

Mr. Speaker, for 100 years, this church has been a place of worship, solace, and support, serving as a beacon of faith for families in Houston's East End. It has always stood for people over politics, placing the community's needs first and foremost. I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating this important milestone and the generations of parishioners who have made the Blessed Sacrament Church into the spiritual house that Peter envisioned.

HONORING WASHINGTON COUNTY ON ITS 175TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 175th anniversary of Washington County, Minnesota. On Tuesday, October 29th, the county board will hold a special meeting, open to the public, at the Washington County Historic Courthouse in Stillwater, the county seat and the birthplace of Minnesota. The recently restored Historic Courthouse was built in 1870 and served as the administrative and judicial center of the county for more than 100 years.

The first of Minnesota's counties, Washington County was established on October 27, 1849 through an act of the Minnesota Territorial Legislature which divided the Minnesota Territory into nine counties: Washington, Ramsey, Benton, Itasca, Wabasha, Dakotah, Wahnaha, Mahkata, and Pembina. The county was named in honor of George Washington.

Among the smallest Minnesota's counties by area, it is the fifth largest county by population at 267,568 people according to the 2020 census. The easternmost county of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area, its southwestern border is defined by the Mississippi River and the St. Croix River which forms the county's eastern border with Wisconsin. At its southernmost point is the confluence of these two great rivers.

With diverse communities ranging from urban to rural, Washington County is home to a variety of thriving commercial, industrial, natural, and agricultural industries. Top among these industries is Health Care followed by Manufacturing, Professional, Scientific & Technical Services, Finance & Insurance, and Retail Trade. Population growth and a vital econ-

omy have allowed Washington County to develop a prosperous and diverse local labor force.

Washington County also boasts plentiful natural beauty, including the St. Croix River Valley, which was among the first areas to be designated as a "National Wild and Scenic River" by the federal government in 1968. William O'Brien State Park and Afton State Park offer hiking, camping, swimming, skiing, fishing, biking, birdwatching, and other outdoor recreation just a short drive from Saint Paul and its east metro suburbs. The river towns of the St. Croix, including Scandia, Marine on St. Croix, Stillwater, and Afton offer historic charms to weekend tourists throughout the year.

Throughout 175 years, Washington County has played a special role in Minnesota as a place of historic significance and great natural beauty. Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating this anniversary of special significance to our east metro community, the Fourth Congressional District, and the entire state of Minnesota.

RECOGNIZING PA-1'S HOMETOWN HERO: JEFF BEKOS

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary individual from Pennsylvania's First Congressional District—someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration that I recognize Jeff Bekos, one of our district's distinguished hometown Heroes.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolades but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their unwavering integrity the strength of their character and their steadfast commitment to the people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon which our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and, in doing so, call us all to higher standards of service and compassion. Jeff has embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

On July 5, 2013, the Bekos' lives changed forever when their vibrant 13-year-old daughter Hailey suddenly lost the ability to speak. Jeff and his wife, Liz, rushed her to the hospital, where she experienced the first of what would be thousands of seizures. In a matter of minutes, Hailey's life as a spirited cheerleader was upended, and she was diagnosed with Anti-NMDA Receptor Encephalitis—a rare disease that destroys brain cells, rendering patients unable to speak, walk, or control their movements. The weeks and months that followed were a tumultuous journey filled with countless challenges, seizures and a four-month coma. Yet, through it all, the Bekos family found hope, faith, and strength through the community and support at the Ronald McDonald House, where they stayed for 254 days while Hailey fought for her life. This hope was instrumental in the fight for her life, and against all odds, Hailey emerged from her coma and is thriving today.

Now, Jeff is channeling his energy and gratitude into supporting families facing similar challenges. This summer, Jeff embarked on an extraordinary adventure, cycling 4,600 miles across the country from Irvine, California, to Philadelphia. The monumental endeavor, aptly coined "One Dad's Mission," is part of his goal to raise \$5 million for the Ronald McDonald House Charities to thank the organization that supported his family in their darkest hours and give back to other families navigating similar, unimaginable challenges.

Jeff's mission is more than a fundraising effort; it is shining example of how the support of community can provide the strength and hope to rise.

It is the work of individuals like Jeff that reminds us of the strength of the human spirit, turning your darkness into light, and uplifting other families facing similar challenges. Today, we honor Jeff Bekos not just for his remarkable service but for who he is—a true hero in every sense of the word.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Jeff Bekos for his extraordinary service. I ask my call to join me in honoring this exceptional individual, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May his example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.

HONORING THE 50-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE LEAGUE OF MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, we come together today to honor and celebrate the monumental 50-year anniversary of the League of Mexican American Women. Founded with a steadfast commitment to community service and empowerment, the League's journey has been one of resilience, dedication, and unwavering support for Latinas and the broader community.

The roots of the League trace back to a group of visionary women in the years 1973 and 1974, including Dolly Arredondo, Betty Rodriguez, Mercy Bencomo, Rachel Torres, and Rose Najera. In 1973, a pivotal moment arose when Dolly Arredondo extended an invitation to local Latina women, sparking discussions about the organization of the Mexican American Women for the betterment of the community. The League of Mexican American Women officially took shape in 1973 and was ratified in 1975. The organization's central tenet was community service, distinct from political pursuits. Its primary mission was to provide leadership training for Latina women in Fresno, fostering empowerment across generations and social backgrounds.

The League's inaugural women's conference, "La Primera Conferencia Femenil," chaired by Josie Mena, set the stage for a series of impactful gatherings. It convened in the same year at the Pinedale Community Center, focusing on critical topics such as health, economic well-being, and social justice. Distinguished by their deep experience in various organizations, the League's founding members

were no strangers to community engagement. They were committed volunteers, fundraisers, and educators who had often encountered roles relegated to auxiliary positions in male-led Hispanic organizations. The League was a platform to amplify their voices and elevate issues impacting Latinas.

As the Nation underwent the "feminine revolution," the League of Mexican American Women held a unique perspective. While they admired the broader women's movement, they believed that stronger leadership was needed within the Latina community. This sentiment was especially pronounced within the Chicano Movement on university campuses. Through this period of transformation, several college students joined the League, infusing it with energy and contributing to various programs. Throughout its journey, the League of Mexican American Women achieved significant milestones. Affiliation with the Comisión Femenil Mexicana National, Inc. in 1975 and participation in the ERA March in Washington, D.C. in 1980 highlighted their commitment to broader causes.

The League's legacy is interwoven with scholarship initiatives, community events, and partnerships that have transformed lives. From the Fiesta Navideña Fashion Show initiated by Betty Rodriguez, which has raised and awarded over \$511,000 in scholarships, to the Adelante Mujer Hispanic Conference, the League has exemplified dedication to education and cultural enrichment. Notably, the League fostered the Mariposa Project, designed to empower high school Latinas through education. The League's commitment to advocating for Latinas has remained steadfast. Over the years, it has inspired countless women to pursue higher education, secure leadership roles, and contribute to society. With its unwavering dedication, the League of Mexican American Women continues to inspire and empower, creating pathways of success for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my esteemed colleagues to join me in celebrating the 50-year milestone of the League of Mexican American Women. Its legacy stands as a testament to the transformative power of collective action, determination, and commitment to uplifting our community.

RECOGNIZING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF CHIEF TY SILCOX

HON. AARON BEAN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. BEAN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, four years ago, I answered one of the scariest phone calls a man can receive. My wife, Abby, called me to tell me lightning struck our house, and it caught on fire while she was inside it. But by the grace of God and the quick work of the fire department, Abby, our son Walker and our dog Daisy escaped unscathed.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my personal gratitude for one of the heroes who has been helping families like mine and saving lives for nearly four decades, Fernandina Beach Fire Chief Ty Silcox. Chief Silcox is retiring on October 31, 2024 after a decade on the job. Under his leadership, the department grew into a modern, efficient force overseeing

100 emergency responders across fire, EMS, and ocean rescue services.

His visionary work included the design and construction of a state-of-the-art fire station and the strategic management of resources during natural disasters.

I ask my colleagues to join me today to recognize Chief Silcox. I thank him. Northeast Florida is a safer place because of him. Let's go get 'em.

RECOGNIZING SPINA BIFIDA AWARENESS MONTH

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize October as National Spina Bifida Month, and to raise awareness and pay tribute to the more than 166,000 Americans living with Spina Bifida—the most common permanently disabling birth defect compatible with life. It is imperative we highlight the critical challenges to improved quality of life we must address to ensure each and every American can achieve their full potential.

The federal government has an obligation to advance research into devastating diseases and disabilities to help find cures and therapies and to identify preventative strategies. Equally important is federal support for programs and initiatives that help patients and their families as they struggle to live with these conditions, such as Spina Bifida.

Literally translated as "split spine," Spina Bifida is a condition that occurs when a baby's neural tube fails to develop or close properly. Typically occurring within the first 28 days of pregnancy while the neural tube is forming, Spina Bifida often develops before a woman even knows she is pregnant.

Sponsored by the Spina Bifida Association (SBA), National Spina Bifida Awareness Month is a time to highlight the needs of the community and recognize the importance of the work done year-round to advance research, programs, and policies aimed at meeting those needs.

As co-chair of the Congressional Spina Bifida Caucus, I've had the honor to work alongside SBA to advance Spina Bifida awareness, research, and public health efforts in Congress. Founded in 1973, SBA is the Nation's only organization solely dedicated to advocating for and assisting those living with and affected by this debilitating birth defect.

Through its nearly 60 chapters in more than 125 communities, SBA brings expectant parents together with those who have a child with Spina Bifida. This interaction helps to answer questions and concerns, but most importantly it lends much needed support, solidarity, inspiration, and hope.

Mr. Speaker, Spina Bifida is a birth defect that can happen to anyone. Every day, an average of eight babies are affected by Spina Bifida and approximately 3,000 pregnancies are affected by this birth defect each year.

We do not know the exact cause of this condition, but research has found that if a woman takes 400 mcg of folic acid every day before she becomes pregnant, she reduces her risk of having a baby with Spina Bifida or another neural tube defect by as much as 70 percent.

No two cases of Spina Bifida are ever the same and so this birth defect is commonly referred to as the “snowflake condition.” Children born with Spina Bifida typically undergo dozens of surgeries before they reach the age of 18. And during their lifetime, someone with Spina Bifida will face at least \$1 million in medical expenses, including multiple surgeries, and most can expect to spend much of their lives in a wheelchair or walking with braces.

Despite these challenges—and thanks to advances in research and medicine, along with policies supportive of children with disabilities—nearly two-thirds of Americans currently living with Spina Bifida have made it to adulthood. And while these strides are certainly worth celebrating, people with Spina Bifida—particularly adults—continue to face a crisis of care that could be largely prevented with the right resources and policies.

For instance, while we have a coordinated system of care designed to treat children with Spina Bifida in the U.S., there is no equivalent for adults. The result is that adults face a “care cliff” and enter a very fractured medical system where they are unable to find physicians willing or even knowledgeable enough to provide treatment, as Spina Bifida is still largely taught in medical schools as a pediatric condition and education has failed to keep pace with the rapid rise in the adult Spina Bifida population.

Thousands of adults are left with few options other than to seek care in the emergency room or continue to see their pediatric care team until insurance will no longer cover their care because of their age. And to make matters worse, many of these adults rely on Medicaid as their insurance provider, so even if they have the means to travel to an adult specialist, if they are located in another state—as is often the case—their coverage is denied. Across the country, there are more than 100 pediatric clinics devoted to caring for children with Spina Bifida. There are only 20 whose focus is on adults.

Constituents in my district are fortunate to be in proximity to Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, home to the Spina Bifida Program, which offers comprehensive and expert care from diagnosis through adulthood. We offer great thanks to the medical professionals and researchers who endeavor to improve the quality of life for individuals living with Spina Bifida and their families.

At the federal level, we can and should make dramatic improvements in the ability of adults with Spina Bifida to access quality care by increasing the funding of the CDC’s National Spina Bifida Program—the only federal program tasked with improving the care and outcomes for people living with Spina Bifida.

In 2008, the Federal Spina Bifida Program created a National Spina Bifida Patient Registry to collect the scientific data needed to evaluate existing medical services for Spina Bifida patients, and to provide clinicians, researchers, patients, and families a window into what care models are effective and what treatments are not making a measurable difference.

Building on this in 2014, the Spina Bifida Program funded the development of a Spina Bifida Collaborative Care Network to identify and to disseminate best practices for the care of people with Spina Bifida at all ages.

However, with only \$7.5 million in annual funding—and this amount has been stag-

nant—there are only 11,000 patients in the national registry, limiting the ability of medical professionals to glean knowledge that would advance research in areas critical to improving quality of life. Even modest increases to this funding would make an enormous difference.

Additionally, we should urge NIH to work collaboratively across their many divisions to better understand Spina Bifida. As Spina Bifida can affect every organ and every system in the human body, a collaborative effort undertaken by NIH could result in research that would lead to better care for both this generation and future generations of Spina Bifida patients.

We are so fortunate today that our country is benefiting from the talent and contributions of the first generation of adults living with Spina Bifida. Today, I honor and celebrate all of them, along with their care partners, and also remember those we have lost to this condition. And I urge my colleagues to not only increase funding for the National Spina Bifida Program, but to work together so that these Americans receive the care and treatment all of us want for our families and loved ones.

I invite my colleagues to join me in this mission and join me in the Spina Bifida Caucus to broaden our efforts and advance the goal of a better future for people living with Spina Bifida.

RECOGNIZING PA-1’S HOMETOWN
HERO: JIM McDEVITT

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary individual from Pennsylvania’s First Congressional District someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration that I recognize Jim McDevitt, one of our district’s distinguished Hometown Heroes.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolades but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their unwavering integrity, the strength of their character, and their steadfast commitments to the people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon which our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and in doing so, call us all to higher standards of service, and compassion. Jim McDevitt has embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

Jim’s lifetime of service began in 1959 when he joined the U.S. Coast Guard at just nineteen years old. For seven years he diligently served our Nation as a patrol boat operator, safeguarding our shores and ensuring the safety of countless lives. Following his honorable service in the Coast Guard, Jim answered the call to serve once more and embarked upon a career as a Philadelphia Police Officer. Upon retirement, his devotion to service continues in a profoundly meaningful role honoring his fellow veterans. Jim, a member of Sons of The American Legion Post 798 in Warminster, has sounded taps at more than 5,000 burials, honoring veterans at their final resting place. This act of reverence, performed

with Jim’s signature unwavering precision and heartfelt respect, is his way of offering a final goodbye to those who served our Nation with honor. When asked why he continues to serve in this role, he replied, “I’m going to continue to do it until I can’t.” Jim’s lifetime of service to our community and country and unwavering commitment to his fellow servicemen and women exemplify the true essence of selfless service, sacrifice, and love of country and neighbor.

Mr. Speaker, it is through the work of people like Jim McDevitt that our communities thrive, and our Nation grows stronger. His actions and service remind us that progress is not forged in grand gestures, but in the cumulative power of selfless acts. He embodies the timeless American values of resilience, generosity, and compassion, showing us that the future is built by those who care deeply, act decisively, and give without hesitation.

On behalf of Pennsylvania’s First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Jim McDevitt for his extraordinary service. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this exceptional individual, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May his example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.

SPINA BIFIDA AWARENESS MONTH

HON. KEVIN HERN

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. HERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of National Spina Bifida Awareness Month to pay tribute to the numerous individuals and their families across our country living with this condition.

Spina Bifida is a condition I am very familiar with. My sister and my niece both suffer from spina bifida. I know how it can impact a family.

Spina Bifida is the nation’s most common permanently disabling birth defect-compatible with life. Spina Bifida stems from a hole in the spinal cord, a condition known as a neural tube defect, as the spinal column fails to close properly during development in the womb, and it impacts virtually every major organ system. Children born with Spina Bifida typically undergo dozens of surgeries before they become adults. Adults living with Spina Bifida face myriad physical health, mental health, and other challenges, such as unemployment and limited access to quality primary and specialty care.

There are currently an estimated 166,000 individuals in the United States living with Spina Bifida, approximately 65 percent of whom are adults. This disease is now witnessing its first generation of adults, an incredible milestone, considering that the original designation of Spina Bifida as a childhood condition meant that the vast majority did not experience life beyond youth.

We have taken tremendous steps forward in recent years due to dedicated medical research, but there is so much we still don’t know.

Unfortunately, funding for Spina Bifida is limited. The only place in the Federal Government that is specifically studying this complex

condition for children and adults is the Spina Bifida Program at the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the CDC through the National Spina Bifida Patient Registry and the Spina Bifida Collaborative Care Network.

People with Spina Bifida deserve no less than the rest of us as we age. We must ensure that adults with Spina Bifida can receive high-quality medical care and that researchers have the funds necessary to continue the development of treatments for spina bifida.

HONORING THE CONSECRATION OF
DR. PAUL L. BINION II TO THE
OFFICE OF BISHOP

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great honor and excitement on behalf of the Westside Church of God Consecration Planning Teams' announcement of Dr. Paul L. Binion II. Today, we will witness the Episcopal Consecration of Dr. Paul L. Binion to the esteemed office of Bishop.

Elevating an individual to the position of Bishop is a recognition of their exceptional leadership, unwavering service, and unblemished integrity. Dr. Paul L. Binion, fondly known as Pastor Binion, has dedicated over four decades of his life to serving both his local community and the state of California. He is not only a spiritual leader but a mentor, confidant, and guiding light to countless individuals.

Pastor Binion's remarkable journey began in Fairfield, Alabama, where he was born to Paul Lawrence Binion, Sr. and Sara Ellafair House Binion. As the eldest of five siblings, he embarked on a path that would lead him to Los Angeles, California, and eventually to Fresno, where he assumed the role of Senior Pastor at the Westside Church of God in 1977. His educational achievements include a Bachelor's Degree in History from California State University, Los Angeles, and a Master's Degree of Divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. His profound commitment to faith and education was acknowledged when the Southern California School of Ministry conferred upon him the honorary title of "Doctor of Divinity."

Pastor Binion's impact extends far beyond the walls of his church. He has been an active leader in various organizations and initiatives, demonstrating his dedication to the betterment of the community. Some of his notable roles include serving as a Presbyter of Berean Fellowship of Churches, participating in the African American Clergy Task Force, contributing to the Southwest Fresno Development Corporation, and advising the President of Fresno Pacific University on Clergy and Church Development. He has also been an advocate for social justice through his involvement with Central California Evangelicals for Social Action in addition to his contributions to the City of Fresno Mayoral Advisory Board and the Police Advisory Council. Pastor Binion's deep commitment to mental health and well-being is exemplified through the establishment of the Westside Community Counseling Center, which has served as a vital resource for the community.

His dedication to education and career development has shone through the Education and Career Initiative, a program designed to empower students in the pursuit of their educational and professional aspirations. Throughout his journey, Pastor Binion has been a source of guidance and wisdom, not only for his congregation but also for fellow pastors and community leaders. He has shared his knowledge and faith as a conference speaker, preacher, and teacher of the Bible, leaving a lasting impact on both local and national levels. In addition to his remarkable professional achievements, Pastor Binion is a devoted husband to Valarie Jean Metoyer Binion, and a loving father and grandfather. He and Valarie have been married since 1978 and have three daughters, Tiffany, Crisandra, and Kimberley, along with several grandchildren.

As we come together to witness the Episcopal Consecration of Dr. Paul L. Binion, we recognize not only a spiritual leader but a dedicated servant of the community. His journey is a testament to the enduring impact that one individual can have when guided by faith, compassion, and a commitment to the betterment of others.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my esteemed colleagues to join me in commemorating this significant moment in the life of Dr. Paul L. Binion, a man whose contributions have touched the hearts and souls of many.

CELEBRATING THE 100TH
BIRTHDAY OF VICTOR MONACELLI

HON. VINCE FONG

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FONG. Mr. Speaker, I rise to wish a happy 100th birthday to Mr. Victor Monacelli of Ridgecrest, California, a veteran of the Second World War and a soon-to-be great-great-grandfather.

Born in Humphrey, Washington, to Tom Monacelli and Myrtle Winsor Monacelli on November 16, 1924, Victor was raised with his brothers Cecil, Leroy, and Thomas Monacelli. At age seventeen, Victor was one of the many brave young men who, along with his brother, Thomas, volunteered for service in World War II just after his graduation from Ellensburg High School. With his enlistment in the U.S. Navy on October 27, 1942, Victor would soon find himself stationed in the South Pacific's New Hebrides Islands where he supported the Guadalcanal Campaign for 19 months. During his time stationed in what he recalls as a "tropical paradise," enemy aircraft launched waves of attacks against Victor's position. Auguring well for his posterity, he was never once injured in these airstrikes. After roughly two years serving our country through some of its greatest naval operations, Victor would finally return to the United States. On his birthday in 1944, he managed to cross the International Date Line while being transported stateside to San Francisco, granting Victor and his friends one additional day to celebrate his twentieth birthday.

Following a brief posting in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1947, Victor was transferred to the Naval facility in Lakehurst, New Jersey, where he attended flight school and completed his first parachute jump on August 2, 1947.

Through this training, he became certified as a Parachute Rigger, safely packing and re-packing parachutes for airborne personnel. It was near the facility there in Lakehurst, New Jersey that Victor met his first wife Jeanne. In 1949, he was transferred to Naval Auxiliary Air Station Charlestown in South Carolina, where for six months, he was stationed on the nation's longest-serving aircraft carrier in American history—the U.S.S. *Midway*.

Returning to the Pacific once again with the U.S. Navy, Victor served in Hawaii from 1950 to 1958, serving in the Korean War through the training and instruction of airborne personnel in the use of aviation survival equipment. Witnesses described him as instrumental in establishing the survival school at Naval Air Station Barber's Point where he continued to safely pack and inspect parachutes and survival equipment as well as airborne personnel. His final assignment in the U.S. Navy saw him move to New Iberia, Louisiana, where he met his second wife Mary, and retired from active duty by joining the Fleet Reserve in 1961. Victor retired from the Navy on November 1, 1971, achieving the rank of E7 Petty Officer after nearly 30 years of service to the United States.

Victor moved to La Verne, California in 1974, where he owned a gas station and later worked as a travel agent. He soon fell in love with California's beauty, next moving to Bakersfield, Lake Isabella, and finally to Ridgecrest. These days, Victor enjoys spending quiet time at home with his wife Juliette and spending time with his two sons, David and Victor Jay, daughter Lorri, six grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and soon his first great-great-grandchild. In 2022, Victor was one of two living World War II veterans in Ridgecrest who were both honored and presented with certificates of appreciation for their service to the country.

Mr. Speaker, from our nation's Capitol, and on behalf of a most grateful Nation, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating 100 years of Victor Monacelli's incredible life. His patriotism and pursuit of the American dream should inspire future generations and this dedication to defending our warrior is another symbol of this legacy.

RECOGNIZING PA-1'S HOMETOWN
HERO: JOSEPH A. FLUEHR III

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary individual from Pennsylvania's First Congressional District—someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration that I recognize Joseph A. Fluehr III, one of our district's distinguished Hometown Heroes.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolades, but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their unwavering integrity, the strength of their character, and their steadfast commitment to the people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and, in

doing so, call us all to higher standards of service and compassion. Joe has embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

For over five decades, Joe has been a cornerstone of our community. As a respected funeral director and a relentless advocate for local veterans, he has been a beacon of light, a guardian of dignity, and a true pillar of support for those who have served our Nation. Joe's commitment to our community began when he and his wife, Christine, opened the Joseph A Fluehr III Funeral Home in Richboro in 1976. From the outset, their funeral home was more than a place of professional care; it became a sanctuary where families found genuine compassion and solace during their most challenging times.

Joe's impact on our community extends far beyond his professional life, and his leadership has had a transformative impact on several community institutions and organizations. For over a decade, Joe served on the Board of Trustees for St. Mary Medical Center, leading as Chairman for nine of those years. Under his stewardship, St. Mary's grew into a regional hub of care, expanding its footprint, staffing, and services to become a Level II Trauma Center. In addition, Joe serves our community as a member of the Northampton Township Volunteer Fire Department, Tri-Hampton Rescue Squad Advisory Board, the Council Rock Kiwanis Invitational, Northampton Township Historical Society, and Northampton Township Business and Professional Association, where he received the recognition of "Businessman of the Year"—a truly fitting honor for someone who has done so much for our community.

Yet, perhaps Joe's most profound impact has been his unwavering advocacy for our community's veterans. From his pivotal role in establishing the Washington Crossing National Cemetery to his quiet acts of generosity personally providing urns, nameplates, and even services for our unclaimed veterans, Joe's profound contributions have ensured that the service and sacrifices of our hero veterans are honored, celebrated, and remembered for generations to come.

Joe's life is a shining example of what it means to serve others with humility and grace, consistently putting others before himself. Through kindness, compassion, and unwavering commitment to serving others, Joe has shown us all what it means to live a life of purpose, to give without expecting anything in return, and to leave the world better than we found it. Today, we honor Joseph A. Fluehr, III not just for his remarkable deeds but for who he is—a true hero in every sense of the word.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Joseph A. Fluehr, III for his extraordinary service. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this exceptional individual, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May his example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.

HONORING WILLIAM ROBERTSON
WAINWRIGHT'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

HON. ANDY HARRIS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to honor and celebrate Mr. William Robertson Wainwright of Salisbury, Maryland as he approaches his 100th birthday on November 21st.

Born in 1924, Mr. Wainwright honorably served in the United States Army during World War II from 1943 until 1946.

It is a distinct privilege to recognize Mr. Wainwright on his upcoming 100th birthday and celebrate this wonderful milestone. On behalf of Maryland's First Congressional District, I wish Mr. Wainwright a very happy birthday.

RECOGNIZING OHIO NATIONAL
GUARD COMPANY B, 3RD BATTALION,
238TH AVIATION REGIMENT
BEING NAMED OHIO'S 13TH
DISTRICT CHAMPION OF THE
WEEK

HON. EMILIA STRONG SYKES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mrs. SYKES. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to recognize Ohio National Guard Company B, 3rd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment from Green as Ohio's 13th Congressional District Champion of the Week.

Hurricane Helene caused serious flooding and damage across Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee and Virginia, which left roads underwater, basements flooded, wires down, people trapped in their cars in flooded areas, and people stranded in their homes.

Ohio National Guard Company B, 3rd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment answered the call to assist. These brave men and women navigated through flooded North Carolina streets to assist people stranded in their homes and cars.

Ohio's 13th Congressional District is made up of champions who work hard and don't hesitate to lend a helping hand to a neighbor in need. The unwavering and selfless work of these service members in the wake of Hurricane Helene is a shining example of why our district is known as the "Birthplace of Champions."

I thank the members of the Ohio National Guard Company B, 3rd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment for their collaboration, bravery, and service in the aftermath of this hurricane, and for dedicating their lives each and every day to protect our community and country.

HONORING THE LIFE OF PATRICIA
ANN "PATTY" SIMONIAN

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Patricia Ann "Patty"

Simonian, who passed away at age 80 on March 11, 2023. Patty was mother, friend, and member of the St. George Greek Orthodox Church. Patty was a godmother to me. She was known for the many contributions she made in the community throughout her life.

Patty was born on May 4, 1942, to John and Mary Costa in Merced, California. She went to Central Union High School and met the love of her life, Pete Simonian. Ten years later, they married on August 26, 1961. They started a farm of vegetables. Their children Talbert, Nanette, and Peter J. would help on the farm planting prunes that they grew organically until 2011 when Patty decided to sell the farm to family members.

During her life, Patty was very involved in the community and with her family. She was a FFA Mom, CUHS Band Mom, president of the POMS for 2 years, 4H leader in different capacities, Fresno County President for 7 years, and more. She was an active member for her church, St. George Greek Orthodox Church. Patty and Pete decided to renew their vows on their 40th Anniversary at the church.

Patty enjoyed being with her husband, and they both participated in the Cabrillo Civic Clubs of California. Patty would participate in different groups for her children. She joined the Blue Star Moms because of her son, Peter's service in the United States Navy, and would support her daughter Nanette with the Central Valley CWA.

Her love for family was evident. Patty enjoyed being around her grandchildren and never denied babysitting them. The time she spent with family and friends was something to cherish every chance she had.

During her time at Paintbrush Assisted Living and Memory Care, her joy radiated as the greeter, and she spent her time in the community garden. Patty was precise on the crops she planted and would make sure to inform the residents it was time to pick them.

Patty was preceded in death by her parents, John and Mary Costa, and her husband, Pete Simonian.

Patty is survived by her son Talbert, her daughter Nanette, her son Peter J. and wife Toni, grandchildren: Matthew, Kylie, Jerad, Cassidy, and Caydin. She is survived by her brother Kenneth Costa and brother-in-law Scott, sister Johnell Costa Wilt, and brother-in-law Dennis. Patty is also survived by neighboring cousins Bette O'Sullivan and Jim Costa, along with her nieces, nephews, and many cousins.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life of Patricia Ann "Patty" Simonian. May she be remembered as the pure joy of her life for all who knew her.

RECOGNIZING PA-1'S HOMETOWN
HERO: JOSEPH D'EMIDIO

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary individual from Pennsylvania's First Congressional District—someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration that I recognize Joseph

D'Emidio, one of our district's distinguished Hometown Heroes.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolades but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their unwavering integrity, the strength of their character, and their steadfast commitment to the people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon which our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and, in doing so, call us all to higher standards of service and compassion. Joseph D'Emidio has embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

Over the last century, Joe has demonstrated the selfless service, dedication, integrity, and patriotism that have defined the greatest generation. As the world plunged into war, at just nineteen years old, Joe answered the call of duty, enlisted in the U.S. Navy, and soon found himself on the shores of England, preparing for one of the most pivotal moments in history: the D-Day invasion. His role aboard an LST, landing on the shores of Normandy, helped turn the tide in favor of the Allied forces and secure the freedom we cherish today. But his extraordinary service did not stop there; Joe went on to play a critical role in supporting the Allied forces during the Battle of the Bulge, standing firm in the face of overwhelming adversity.

Following the war, Joe returned home to his beloved Bristol Borough community, where he continued to seek ways to serve and make a difference. As a founding member of the Third District Volunteer Fire Company (and their very first Captain), Joe helped establish a legacy of protection and care that still serves Bristol today. He also founded Cameo Kitchens, a successful family-run business on Mill Street for decades, thereby shaping the future of Bristol's thriving small business community. In addition, Joe has been an integral member of the Bristol Borough Lions Club for over fifty years, where he has served his community with the same passion and spirit with which he defended our Nation and freedom.

At 100 years old, Joe continues to serve as an inspiration to us all. Whether woodworking at the Bristol Borough Senior Citizen Center or serving as a communicant at St. Ann's Catholic Church, he is a reminder that true greatness lies in selflessness, service, and love for family, faith, community, and country. Today, we honor Joseph D'Emidio not just for his remarkable deeds, but for who he is—a true hero, in every sense of the word.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Joseph D'Emidio for his extraordinary service. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this exceptional individual, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May his example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.

THANKING ERNEST WADE BALLOU
FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

HON. BRYAN STEIL

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Ernest Wade

Ballou on his retirement as House Legislative Counsel, after over forty years of service to the House of Representatives.

Wade joined the Office of Legislative Counsel after earning his J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1983. Throughout his tenure Wade has provided nonpartisan, expert support to members of Congress, committees, and staff on matters related to foreign affairs, Native American issues, federal land, intelligence, veterans' affairs, federal tax law, public debt, health care, Social Security, and more. I am pleased to have worked with Wade in his capacity supporting the Committee on House Administration.

Since 2016, Wade has served as the House Legislative Counsel, leading the office and managing a committed team of legislative experts to provide the House with impartial and confidential drafting and counseling services for bills, amendments, resolutions, and laws. Wade has also been a key partner on the Congressional Data Task Force, a group united in their efforts to modernize and improve data accessibility for the public. He played a critical role in developing the Comparative Print Suite tool for Members and staff and has worked closely with the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, as well as the Subcommittee on Modernization, to implement innovative ideas and recommendations that will help Congress work better for the American people. Wade's many accomplishments were recently recognized by the Congressional Management Foundation's Democracy Award for Lifetime Achievement. Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that before going to law school and joining the Office of Legislative Counsel, Wade was a fire fighter, an experience that likely prepared him well for a career in the House.

Wade began his career serving under the fourth House Legislative Counsel and now he leaves as the eighth House Legislative Counsel. His expertise and dedication to helping us turn our policy ideas into concise legislative text will be sorely missed. On behalf of my colleagues and the entire House community, I thank him for his leadership and longstanding commitment to serving the People's House.

RECOGNIZING GIRL SCOUTS OF
NYPENN PATHWAYS ON THE
12TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF THE GIRL

HON. BRANDON WILLIAMS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. WILLIAMS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Aarohi Rastogi, Mia Enders, and Rayna Reed, three Girl Scouts from Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways, for demonstrating extraordinary leadership at the 11th Annual Girls Speak Out in commemoration of International Day of the Girl on October 11, 2024, at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York, NY.

International Day of the Girl is an annual and internationally recognized observance on October 11 which acknowledges the importance, power, and potential of adolescent girls. This year's theme, 'Girls' vision for the future', conveys the need for urgent action and persistent hope, driven by the power of girls'

voices and vision for the future. With the right support, resources and opportunities, the potential of the world's more than 1.1 billion girls is limitless. And when girls lead, the impact is immediate and wide reaching; families and communities are all stronger, our future brighter.

Co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of Canada, Peru, and Turkey, UN Women, UNICEF, and UNFPA, the 11th Annual Girls Speak Out for International Day of the Girl Child called for a push for accountability for girls' rights and investment in girls' leadership and vision for their futures. This year's Girls' Speak Out at UNHQ provided an opportunity for girls to hold direct dialogue with Member States and UN Agencies through a girl-led town hall discussion, followed by a Girls' Action conference, hosted by girls, for girls.

Aarohi, Mia, and Rayna were selected to not only participate as Girl Activists but also as moderators for the town hall to engage with policymakers and emphasize the importance of girls in bringing change to their peers and communities, and facilitators for the Girls' Action conference learning labs.

In their roles as Girl Activists, Aarohi and Rayna shared the work they have done in pursuit of the prestigious Gold Award, the highest award in Girl Scouting.

For Aarohi, the Gold Award is an opportunity to create and deliver a comprehensive mental health education program for 7th–12th grade students in India. Inspired by her family members and peers in India, Aarohi collaborated with NGOs and mental health experts from around the world to create a curriculum covering topics such as stigma, stress and anxiety, depression, and suicide prevention.

For Rayna, the Gold Award is an opportunity to establish a peer mentoring program with three of her friends, including Mia, and her school's Assistant Principal to mitigate learning loss and the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. With the launch of the Middle School Mentor Program, Rayna and her peers seek to build community and increase access to free tutoring and mentorship programs at their school.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of New York's 22nd Congressional District, I thank these three outstanding young women for their leadership and wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING PA-1'S HOMETOWN
HERO: BILL RIDLER

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary individual from Pennsylvania's First Congressional District—someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration that I recognize Bill Ridler as one of our district's distinguished Hometown Heroes.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolades but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their unwavering integrity, the strength of their character, and their steadfast commitment to the

people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon which our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and in doing so, call us all to higher standards of service and compassion. Bill has embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

Bill's journey has been one full of challenges: Bill has tuberous sclerosis, a disease that causes tumors to form all over the body, reduced his one working kidney to functioning at 15 percent, causes seizures due to the tumors on his brain, high blood pressure from the ones growing in his kidneys, and on top of that chemotherapy treatment has caused him to be immunosuppressed. Yet, despite these hardships, Bill is the embodiment of joy, compassion, optimism, and resilience. Since the age of six, Bill has competed in the Special Olympics and worked tirelessly to raise awareness about the impact of the games while serving as a beacon of inspiration for those facing similar challenges. Remarkably Bill gives away his hard-earned medals to other athletes, advocates, and community members to inspire them, motivate them, and bring joy to them when they need it most. Bill's efforts earned him the prestigious Sheetz Family Award of Excellence for his resilience and dedication—an honor bestowed upon the Special Olympics athlete whose determination and efforts demonstrate the power of the human spirit to overcome obstacles and inspire greatness.

Bill is a testament to the impact of positivity and a reminder that even in the face of immense challenges, we have the power to rise, inspire, and make a difference. Today, we honor Bill Ridler not just for his remarkable deeds but for who he is—a true hero in every sense of the word.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Bill Ridler for his extraordinary service. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this exceptional individual, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May his example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.

RECOGNIZING THE RIVER HILLS AND LAKE WYLIE LIONS CLUB

HON. RALPH NORMAN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. NORMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the River Hills and Lake Wylie Lions Club for its continued record of service to the 5th District of South Carolina, and to congratulate the club for their celebration of their 50th anniversary.

The River Hills and Lake Wylie Lions Club was chartered in 1975 and since its inception, has been a force in the Lake Wylie and Clover communities as the largest and most effective Lions Club in the state of South Carolina. The club's 142 members have raised over \$200,000 annually. Each year, the entire amount raised goes directly to support over 20 charities and services.

The Lions Club has created several of their own projects and organizations that focus on

supporting and serving South Carolina. The River Hills, Lake Wylie Community Foundation was established by the Lions to receive funds and distribute the proceeds to charities in tandem with the organization's goals and with the needs of the community. The foundation's motto is "For Good. For Others. For Ever" and that sentiment can be felt in the impact of this program throughout South Carolina.

The Lions Club also created a partnership with Clover Schools that led to the establishment of Roaring Readers, which provides books for elementary school classrooms, helped start the Roaring Eagle Newspaper, and donates annual scholarships for Clover High School seniors. In addition, the club supports the youth throughout York County and Clover through Kidsight, an eyesight program that screens over 13,000 annually and helps pay for new glasses, eye surgeries, and hearing aids as needed.

The motto of the Lions Club is "we serve." The River Hills and Lake Wylie chapter carries out this mission daily and their impact can be seen and felt throughout our great state. Each of the people that make up this great organization lead with honor, joy, and compassion. They are the people who help make our Nation the greatest in the world. The Lions Club members willingly give up their time, tithe, and talent and live out the South Carolina motto, "While I Breathe, I Hope." Please join me in expressing my heartfelt gratitude for all of their great work and celebrating 50 years of exemplary service.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF IRENE DEVAN PELOIAN

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the life of Irene DeVan Peloian, a remarkable individual whose journey from Belleville, New Jersey, to Fresno, California, was filled with love, family, and a deep commitment to serving others. Irene, born on June 27, 1927, in Belleville, New Jersey, was an astonishing individual whose life touched many hearts. Her legacy, marked by grace, resilience, and unwavering devotion to her loved ones, will forever be cherished.

Irene's early years were shaped by her parents, George and Armen DeVan. Her father, an Armenian-Turkish immigrant, and her mother, a survivor of the Armenian genocide, instilled in her a strong sense of heritage and determination. She carried this with her throughout her life's adventures. Completing her high school education in 1945, Irene's fondest memories included attending dances featuring Frank Sinatra. These dances, enjoyed with her best friend and cousin, Alyce, added a touch of magic to her youth.

Driven by dreams of a career in film, Irene pursued her passion by enrolling at the New York American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Manhattan. Her aspirations led her on a unique path. After two years, she relocated with her family to Fresno, California, where she embarked on a career in retail, notably working at Cahns Women's Clothing store on Fulton Street. Additionally, Irene ventured into the world of runway modeling. In 1952, Irene

married Simon (Sam) Marootian, and together they raised their family on a vineyard ranch in Fowler, California. Irene's warmth and culinary talents made her a beloved hostess, and the couple enjoyed their evenings playing card games with close friends. The close-knit community of Fowler held a special place in her heart, and she often reflected on those years as the best of her life. Irene had a desire to travel, with Hawaii and Las Vegas being among her favorite destinations; she had quite an impressive reputation as a blackjack player.

Passionate about politics, Irene dedicated 30 years of her life to various Democratic Party campaigns. She organized numerous political events at her home, where she would cook Armenian delicacies for visiting governors and senators, showcasing her remarkable hospitality. Beyond her political involvement, her heart belonged to the San Francisco Giants, and she had a deep love for rescue dogs and stray cats. Irene held a special affinity for children and young people, often adopting "sons," "daughters," and "grandchildren" into her extended family. Above all, Irene was a devoted wife, mother, daughter, sister, cousin, "aunty," and friend. Following the loss of her first husband, Sam, Irene found love and companionship with Edward Peloian, whom she married in 1988. Their enduring love and partnership lasted almost 30 years until Ed's passing in 2016. They shared a passion for the arts, providing support to the Fresno Philharmonic and Fresno Art Museum.

Irene DeVan Peloian's legacy lives on, leaving behind cherished memories in the hearts of her loved ones. She is survived by her son and daughter-in-law, Marcus and Anchalee Marootian; daughter, Robyn Marootian; sister-in-law, Scotty DeVan, of Washington; nieces Jaymie DeVan of Los Angeles and Jordan DeVan of Washington; and three nephews, Mike Shahbazian, Steven Shahbazian, and Robert Shahbazian. She is also survived by her godson, Dr. Jordan Howard, of Atlanta, and her best friend, Diane Mosesian, of Colorado.

Mr. Speaker, I extend an invitation to my esteemed colleagues to join me in honoring the life and legacy of Irene. Her remarkable time, filled with resilience, love, and devotion, leaves an indelible mark on our hearts and in the tapestry of our community. Irene's enduring spirit will forever hold a cherished place in our memories and the lives she touched.

RECOGNIZING PA-1'S HOMETOWN HERO: ELIZABETH TODDERUD

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary individual from Pennsylvania's First Congressional District—someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to both our community and our country. It is with great respect and admiration that I recognize Elizabeth Todderud, one of our district's distinguished Hometown Heroes.

Hometown Heroes are not defined by titles or accolades but by the quiet power of their actions. They are distinguished by their unwavering integrity, the strength of their character, and their steadfast commitment to the

people and places they serve. They are the foundation upon which our communities stand—the ones who lift others up, inspire hope, and, in doing so, call us all to higher standards of service and compassion. Elizabeth has embodied this spirit in ways that words can scarcely capture.

Over the past two decades, Elizabeth has poured her heart and soul into handcrafting over 300 blankets for the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society Budget for Baby Program and Camp Lejeune. Rita Fountain, the Relief Society Director, emphasized the profound impact of Elizabeth's contributions to the Navy and marine Corps families at Camp Lejeune preparing to welcome new babies, often many miles away from their loved ones. Elizabeth's

blankets provide these families warmth, comfort, and a sense of community while serving as a token of appreciation for their service and sacrifice. This year, Elizabeth was recognized with the prestigious 10,000-hour pin and a custom-etched glass wedge by the Marine Corps League Patriot Detachment 1230 on behalf of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. Elizabeth's compassion and generosity are a shining example of how one person can make a profound difference in the lives of others. Through her blankets, she has woven a tapestry of hope, solace, and belonging for our military families far from home.

Mr. Speaker, it is through the work of people like Elizabeth that our communities thrive, and our Nation grows stronger. Her actions re-

mind us that progress is not forged in grand gestures, but in the cumulative power of selfless acts. She embodies the timeless American values of resilience, generosity, and compassion, showing us that the future is built by those who care deeply, act decisively, and give without hesitation.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's First Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Elizabeth Todderud for her extraordinary service. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this exceptional individual, whose leadership and spirit of service will inspire generations to come. May her example remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make our communities, country, and world a better place.