

In fact, Toledo, Ohio became the first major city in America to elect a citizen of Lebanese ancestry to the position of Mayor, Mr. Michael Damas who served with distinction.

As one of the world's early cradles of civilization, Lebanon has persevered, both suffering hardship and sharing in prosperity. Remarkably, the spirit of its people shines through. I join the people of Lebanon, those of Lebanese ancestry around the world, and the Lebanese American community in celebrating Lebanese Independence Day.

TRIBUTE TO GENERAL ROBERT
"BOB" KEHLER

HON. JEFF FORTENBERRY

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 15, 2013

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate General Robert "Bob" Kehler of United States Strategic Command on his retirement from the Air Force after 38 years of outstanding service to our country. I would also like to thank his wife Marjorie for her selfless sacrifice throughout his career, as well as the sacrifices of their two sons, Matt and Jared.

General Kehler's nearly three years as the head of STRATCOM caps an accomplished career that began in 1975 as a distinguished graduate of the Pennsylvania State University Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps program. Early in his service, he developed expertise in the nuclear enterprise as commander of Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile squadrons at Whiteman Air Force Base, the 30th Space Wing at Vandenberg Air Force Base, the 21st Space Wing at Peterson Air Force Base, and at Air Force Space Command.

The General held numerous additional leadership positions in the Air Force throughout his many years of service. He represented the Secretary of the Air Force on Capitol Hill as the Legislative Liaison and was point man for the President's intercontinental ballistic missile modernization initiative. After his time on Capitol Hill, General Kehler assumed the position of Director of the National Security Space Office and was tasked with integrating a number of our military's space organizations.

General Kehler has been a forward-thinking leader as evidenced by his achievement transferring the ICBM mission to the Air Force Global Strike Command and helping to create the 24th Air Force to execute the evolving and critical cyberspace mission. With his important work in these areas, there is no doubt that the United States is more prepared today to face the challenges and threats confronting us in the nuclear and cyber domains.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the good fortune to work with General Kehler on a number of occasions as the U.S. Representative for Strategic Command's headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue, Nebraska. He is a brilliant thinker and I know that he has contributed immeasurably to STRATCOM's global missions.

It is my distinct honor to lead my fellow Members of Congress in thanking General Robert "Bob" Kehler for his exceptional years of service and to wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

COLORADO HAS THE SECOND
LARGEST AEROSPACE ECONOMY
IN THE UNITED STATES

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 15, 2013

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of myself and my fellow members of the Colorado delegation, Representatives DIANA DEGETTE, CORY GARDNER, DOUG LAMBORN, ED PERLMUTTER, JARED POLIS, and SCOTT TIPTON, about our home state's aerospace leadership and the long-term plan for sustaining America's space-faring future. Space technologies benefit the everyday lives of all American citizens and Colorado has the second largest aerospace economy in the United States. In our great state, there are more than 165,000 employees of the aerospace industry, eight of the nation's top aerospace contractors, over 400 space-related companies, four space-related military commands, and universities among the world's best for aerospace-related degrees.

The United States has lost the ability to put people into space with our own national assets at the end of NASA's Space Shuttle program. Colorado is key to regaining the ability for manned space exploration with programs such as Lockheed Martin's Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle, Sierra Nevada Space Systems' "Dream Chaser" and other low-earth orbit missions aboard United Launch Alliance vehicles. Colorado was a significant contributor to one of the premier space events of this decade. The Mars Science Laboratory "Curiosity" mission, is at the center of Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite technology, and is also a national leader developing satellites that support and protect our nation's civil, commercial and national security interests.

Colorado seeks to remain on the leading edge of America's space-faring future, pursuing designation as a commercial spaceport and leading advocacy for America's space exploration through organizations like the Space Foundation, Colorado Space Coalition, Colorado Space Business Roundtable, and Colorado's Official Air & Space Museum, Wings Over the Rockies.

Wings Over the Rockies' Spreading Wings Gala on November 16, 2013 will gather hundreds of aerospace executives and enthusiasts to honor leading advocates for America's space-faring future—Astronaut Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr., second man to walk on the Moon, and Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson, noted astrophysicist and host of the forthcoming "Cosmos" television series.

It is imperative that we strive to preserve and enhance United States leadership in space to inspire young people, spur innovation, and ensure continued national and economic security. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that we thank Astronaut Aldrin and Dr. Tyson for their positive vision of our space-faring future and commend Wings Over the Rockies and all of Colorado's aerospace community for their commitment to exploring new horizons in the frontier of space for the benefit of generations of American citizens.

HONORING COLUMBIA
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HON. DOUG LAMBORN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 15, 2013

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the accomplishments of Columbia Elementary School in Colorado Springs, Colorado, located in my congressional district, for receiving the Department of Education's prestigious National Blue Ribbon Award.

Established in 1898 in the heart of the city, Columbia Elementary School is one of Colorado Springs's first elementary schools. Its mission statement defines the core learning objectives of the school:

The Columbia Community will collaboratively ensure that learning takes place for ALL by being responsible, setting high standards and accepting no excuses. Our students will be contributing members of society who are respectful, responsible, and capable lifelong learners.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students perform at exceptionally high levels or where significant improvements are being made in students' academic achievement. A National Blue Ribbon School's flag overhead has become a mark of excellence in education recognized by everyone from parents to policy-makers in thousands of communities.

The program recognizes schools in one of two performance categories. The first category is "Exemplary High Performing," in which schools are recognized among their state's highest performing schools, as measured by state assessments or nationally-normed tests. The second category is "Exemplary Improving," in which schools that have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds demonstrate the most progress in improving student achievement levels as measured by state assessments or nationally-normed tests.

Columbia Elementary is an "Exemplary Improving School," but it hadn't always been that way, and there is an extraordinary story behind this. Prior to the arrival of the current school Principal, Karen Shaw, five years ago, the Colorado Springs School District had placed the school on "Technical Assistance" status, because the statistical data about academic achievement indicated "low achievement and low growth for a period of several years." Teachers were working hard, but it wasn't organized or aligned, and kids weren't succeeding. Ms. Shaw changed all of that. She brought a small handful of teachers with her from her previous school and through ingenuity and hard work implemented new curriculum and interventions, schedules and methodologies, data procedures and trainings to change the entire culture of the school. So, in five years this extraordinary school has been transformed from "Technical Assistance" to a "National Blue Ribbon School." This new approach transformed "Low Achievement and Low Growth" test scoring to "High Achievement and High Growth."

I am so proud to have a school of this quality in my Congressional District. The strengths of Columbia are its staff, students, families and community. Teachers embrace using data

to improve instruction, which ultimately has led to increased student achievement. The staff leads by example by being life-long learners themselves! They take advantage of multiple professional development opportunities including active engagement strategies, differentiated instruction, Positive Behavior Supports and Response to Intervention—where Columbia is exemplary at both RTI and PBS implementation.

The teachers at Columbia work over the summer for credit to learn curriculum and create materials for students. They offer numerous after-school activities for students that range from yoga to math club. The staff and teachers' commitment inspires a strong work ethic and exemplary attitude. Students at Columbia are respectful, responsible, safe and kind. As a result, discipline problems have dramatically declined in the past four years, and now teachers have more time to teach. The Award's effect on schools and communities is powerful. As one principal recalls, "The National Blue Ribbon begins a process you cannot stop."

Many National Blue Ribbon Schools find they attract business partners, financial assistance and volunteers. If school choice is an option, as it is at Columbia, student applications to National Blue Ribbon Schools increase. National Blue Ribbon School principals and teacher leaders are called on to give presentations at state, regional, and professional meetings about the practices that have made a difference for their students and faculty. District and state educators visit these model schools to learn about promising leadership and instructional strategies.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent such a fine school and want to recognize the accomplishment of Columbia Elementary School, its teachers and staff, and the students who so richly deserve this coveted Blue Ribbon School Award.

INTRODUCING TWO BILLS RELATED TO POST-9/11 EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 15, 2013

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce two important legislation that would make common-sense reform to Section 3319 of title 38 of the United States pertaining to post-9/11 educational assistance, also known as "Post-9/11 GI Bill." I supported the creation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill because the brave men and women in uniformed services deserve our nation's support in attaining education. I have heard from many constituents who are benefiting from this worthy program. I have also heard from some who say that the law needs to be amended to ensure that the benefits are fully used.

My first bill, Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Enhancement Act, would expand the authority of veterans to transfer post-9/11 educational assistance to dependents within five years of separation from the uniformed services. Currently, members of the uniformed services must transfer their benefits to their

dependent before leaving the services. My bill would give veterans more time to ascertain whether or not life circumstance dictates the need to transfer the educational benefits to their dependents. The goal is to ensure that more people can take advantage of the educational assistance.

My second bill, Increased Age Limit for Post-9/11 Education Assistance Dependents Act, would increase the age limit to use transferred post-9/11 educational assistance from 26 years old to 29 years old. This is again intended to capture more beneficiaries of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, particularly those who are pursuing medical school or other professional degrees where the typical age of entry is higher than other degrees.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support these two measures so that we can better serve our veterans and military families.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LYNN A. WESTMORELAND

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 15, 2013

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 571, I was unavoidably detained in Georgia and could not make it to Washington, DC in time to cast my vote.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."