in the Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy working on cardiac and molecular biology research. She has numerous publications in medical journals and textbooks and has received recognition for her early work on DNA sequencing and cloning.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Commissioner González-Sánchez for her work ensuring high-quality care and services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

HONORING FIRST LIEUTENANT VERNELLA WELLS FOR HER DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT TO THIS COUNTRY

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2012

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a remarkable young woman, Lieutenant Vernella N. Wells of Clarksdale, Mississippi. Born to the proud parents of Troy and Arcola Holmes, Wells has dedicated her life to being a beacon of service to her community and country.

First Lieutenant Wells began her military career in August 2003 as a Private First Class in the Mississippi Army National Guard, assigned to the 155th Heavy Brigade Combat Team in Tupelo, Mississippi. Immediately after graduating high school, she was sent to Basic Training followed by Advanced Individual Training in Fort Lee, Virginia, before serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom from September 2004–January 2006.

Upon returning from Iraq, she enrolled at the University of Mississippi and joined their Army ROTC program, where she received a Bachelor's of Science degree in Exercise Science.

In 2010, Wells was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Mississippi Army National Guard and is currently assigned to the Adjutant General's Branch, where she is the Strength Manager and Company Executive Officer for the 155th Brigade Combat Team of Tupelo, Mississippi.

She is responsible for the overall readiness of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program in North Mississippi. Wells is also spearheading the development of a program that is designed to bring local community resources and volunteers in to help enrich the lives of the Citizen Soldiers on and off duty.

In addition to commitment towards her country, Wells is also very active in her community. Her humanitarian work has included; volunteering at the Veterans Administration Nursing Home, Baptist Memorial HealthPlex, Baptist Memorial Out-Patient Physical Therapy Clinic, United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County Food Pantry, the Special Olympics, Habitat for Humanity fundraising, and just recently as team leader for the "Big Event" community wide volunteer project. In addition, Wells is currently pursuing a MBA with a concentration in Healthcare Administration.

Lieutenant Wells has also garnered multiple awards and decorations from her tireless efforts in the National Guard. Some of these honors include the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal with Campaign Star, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with "M" Device Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Mississippi Medal of Efficiency, Mississippi War Medal, and the Mississippi Longevity Medal (1 Oak Leaf Cluster).

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing 1st Lieutenant Vernella N. Wells for her dedication and commitment to this nation and her community.

TRIBUTE TO ERICA EDWARD

HON. HEATH SHULER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2012

Mr. SHULER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the members of my Congressional Staff who have served with me over the past six years while I have been in office. A Member of Congress' most important responsibility is to provide exceptional constituent services and my Staff is second to none in providing the best assistance to everyone in our District. I take great pride in the work that each one has done on my behalf and on behalf of everyone in the 11th Congressional District of North Carolina.

Each District Staff member has shown a strong sense of dedication in meeting the needs of each and every one of our constituents. They often go well beyond the call to make sure each constituent is treated fairly and respectfully by our government agencies and that they receive appropriate resolution. I owe a debt of gratitude to each one of them for the support and friendship which they have shown me while I have served in Congress.

Erica Edwards has served as a member of my District staff since October of 2008. Erica provided valuable guidance to individuals seeking assistance from the Social Security Administration. Erica's background working with the Department of Social Services at the county level provided our constituents with an additional level of expertise and hands-on experience to effectively serve a broader spectrum of constituents in their greatest time of need.

Erica should be proud of the service she has provided to our District and country. It has been an honor to serve with Erica and as I retire from office I wish her the very best in the future. Western North Carolina is a better place because of her efforts and I will cherish the memories of serving with Erica and the team by my side.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing and thanking Erica Edwards for her hard work on behalf of all of Western North Carolina and to wish her continued success in her future endeavors.

HONORING MRS. NANCY PENN PENSON

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2012

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the life of Mrs. Nancy Penn Penson, a longtime lover of the arts and an acclaimed tennis player. Mrs. Penson, a Dallas native, passed away on Sunday, October 21, 2012 at the age of 88. Mrs. Penson is survived by her husband Lieutenant John G. Penson, three daughters, Annie Vreeland, Suki Jarzemsky, and Read Gendler, and five grandchildren.

Mrs. Penson was highly respected and well known throughout the Dallas community. She graduated with a Degree in Classics from Wellesley College in 1945. Her love for the arts was ignited at an early age when her mother would take her to the symphony. Mrs. Penson held numerous leadership positions such as co-founder of the Dallas Tennis Association, President of the Junior League, and board member of the Dallas Bach Society, the New Dallas Conservatory, and the Southern Methodist University Meadows School of Arts.

In addition to her passion for the arts and her many philanthropic efforts, Mrs. Penson was an accomplished tennis player. She was nationally ranked #1 in Senior Women's Tennis and was inducted into the Texas Tennis Hall of Fame in 2002.

Mr. Speaker, I am saddened to lose such an integral member of the Dallas community. Her selfless contributions to arts and charity groups have touched the lives of many. While the Dallas community will certainly miss Mrs. Penson, her memory will live on in the hearts and minds of those whose lives she has touched over the years.

HONORING BLAKELY WHILDEN

HON. HEATH SHULER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2012

Mr. SHULER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the members of my Congressional Staff who have served with me over the past six years while I have been in office. A Member of Congress' most important responsibility is to provide exceptional constituent services and my team is second to none in providing the best assistance to all in our District. My Washington, D.C. office is also tasked with researching, processing, analyzing, and making recommendations on an infinite number of reports, policies, and legislation. I could not ask for a more talented or dedicated team, and I take great pride in the work that each staff member has done not only on my behalf, but also on behalf of the 11th Congressional District of North Carolina and the United States.

My team has shown a strong sense of dedication to meeting the needs of our constituency. I owe a debt of gratitude to each one of them for the support and friendship they have shown me during my six years of service in the Congress.

Blakely Whilden was the Field Director for my first campaign in 2006. Following the campaign she served as a member of my D.C. staff for much of my first term. Blakely helped manage and organize the office, and always with efficiency and friendliness. Having grown up in the 11th Congressional District, Blakely was proud to help represent her hometown District in our nation's Capitol. She was especially passionate about issues surrounding higher education and focused on policies that would help to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality, affordable education.