

In January 1922, a Minnesotan angler named Will Dilg and a group of fisherman created the Izaak Walton League of America in response to the environmental damage they witnessed during the rapid industrialization following World War One. They began a grassroots campaign to educate the public about the environment and worked to influence Congress to adopt pro-conservation legislation.

Just a year after its creation, the Izaak Walton League successfully blocked legislation that threatened wilderness land that is now the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA). For many years the League was the only organization working to defend this treasured landscape, which has become central to our state's identity. The Izaak Walton League of America would go on to help establish the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and prove instrumental in passing the federal Clean Water Act in 1972. The Izaak Walton League has always remained true to its founding as a grassroots organization. Their members share my belief that in order to protect our nation's wildlife and natural lands we must focus on bringing communities together around a shared appreciation of nature. They do this through school visits, educational seminars, and hands on volunteer work. In 2005, the League established the National Conservation Scholarship Program to develop future leaders who will carry on the League's mission. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to recognize the Izaak Walton League and all its members on this anniversary and wish them continued success on the next 90 years.

REQUIRE THE VA TO CONSIDER  
ALL QUALIFIED VETERANS

**HON. MIKE COFFMAN**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, September 11, 2012*

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, we are remiss in our duty to reintegrate those who served in our military into the civilian workforce. The awful truth is that 16.7 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan servicemembers face joblessness upon separation. To help address this problem, I am introducing the Veterans Employment Act of 2012, which will require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire all qualified veterans before considering other applicants. The Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, has a workforce of 318,856 civilians, only 32 percent have actually ever worn the uniform. Increasing the amount of veterans they employ, while decreasing the amount of unemployed veterans, is a commonsense policy that benefits everyone.

The number of claims for veterans' disability benefits that take more than 125 days to complete has reached 560,000 unresolved cases. The VA claims backlog is leaving too many disabled veterans waiting an average of six months to receive the disability benefits they have earned. Worse, the Integrated Disability Evaluation System, IDES, designed to make the transition from wounded warrior to veteran status more efficient, averages 394 days to process each veteran.

Broadening the presence of veterans working for the VA will ultimately make the organization more responsive to the needs of our

veterans. Having served in both the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps, I understand the strong bond of compassion shared between veterans of all uniforms and across all generations. There is a common culture, terminology and expectation of care among military personnel and veterans that have proven to be uncommon to civilians who struggle to connect with them. A dramatic increase in the number of veterans working at the VA is one solution to the systemic inefficiencies that have plagued the department and the reason I am introducing this bill.

My bill will require the VA to consider all qualified veterans for a job. If the VA determines none of those candidates meet the qualifications, only then may they consider non-veteran candidates. The VA will still be required to submit an explanation to the Office of Personnel Management for all veterans passed-over, in accordance with current regulation. No qualifications for employment will be changed or reduced. Requiring the VA to explain their hiring decisions introduces greater transparency into the process.

I look forward to working with my colleagues from both parties to fulfill our commitment to veterans by recognizing their increased value for employment in the VA.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF HARLEM'S SOUTHERN STYLE FOOD ICON, CALVIN COPELAND

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, September 11, 2012*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the life and legacy of another Harlem's Southern Home Style Restaurant owner and Master Chef, Calvin Copeland, who passed away on Thursday morning, August 23. As we remembered and recently celebrated the life of Sylvia Woods, The Queen of Soul Food—certainly for 50 years, Mr. Calvin Copeland and his famed Copeland's Restaurant & Reliable Catering was worthy and reigned with royalty on West 145th Street, between Amsterdam Avenue and Broadway in the Village of West Harlem.

Born in Virginia on May 1, 1925, Mr. Copeland headed north to live with an aunt who taught him her secret recipe to making finger licking good, fried chicken. Never one to forget his southern roots, Mr. Copeland proudly proclaimed Harlem as "the place" that made him famous by cooking and serving his delicious, and often catered, Southern foods and a little bit of live Jazz.

Mr. Copeland started the business in 1958 as a catering service, one of Harlem's first, in a modest storefront on Broadway north of 148th Street. Mr. Copeland baked and decorated cakes and only had but one worker, Ms. Gertrude Clark, who is white and grew up on a farm in upstate New York did whatever else was needed, which often included preparing Southern fare. Quoted in a New York Times Article, she stated, "I had never eaten collard greens in my life, and there I was making fried chicken and souse meat." Ms. Clark later became Copeland's banquet manager.

Mr. Copeland eventually rented the store next door, opened up a hole in the wall, expanded the kitchen and started serving break-

fast and lunch, cafeteria style. In 1980, As small business restaurateur, Copeland faced many challenges. In 1981, the restaurant burned to the ground and the insurance company went bankrupt before Mr. Copeland was able to recoup his losses. He lost everything, but the liquor. Back in the day Banks were not prone to lending money to restaurants located in Harlem, but because of the generosity of friends and special loyal worker, Copeland was able to reopen in grandeur. That very special worker was Gertrude Clark who mortgaged her property in upstate New York, which along with a small business loan helped her boss secure financing for a new location, on West 145th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam in Hamilton Heights.

Calvin Copeland became an institution, when he moved his business to 547 West 145th Street and opened Copeland's Restaurant & Bar Lounge and Reliable Catering Service, which was also a community buffet style diner. Copeland's became a destination for black families from as far South as Florida and the Carolinas and as far North as Buffalo, New York to Canada. Black entertainers, like Harry Belafonte and Stevie Wonder; and other notables would stop by when in town. Desmond Tutu, the retired Anglican archbishop, ate there once, and so did Muhammad Ali and the comedian Richard Pryor, who threw money in the air when he left the restaurant so as to distract the crowd that had surrounded him. Mr. Copeland stated that Natalie Cole was a regular. Michael Jackson came by once for take-out.

One of my fondest memories was the eve of the Mayoral General Election in 1989 when David N. Dinkins and I campaigned at the subway stop on 145th Street and Broadway and ate at Copeland's Restaurant. I don't know if it was the lucky fried chicken, the collard greens or Copeland's corner, but the next day David N. Dinkins won the election and became the first African American and 106th Mayor of the City of New York.

Copeland Restaurant was a place where you can catch Kathy Sharpton, Candi Staton, Lonnice Youngblood, Gloria Lynne and other great Jazz, Gospel and R&B artist perform. Where politicians held court and Harlem players and shakers hung out for breakfast. I miss those fried apples, chicken livers and cat fish, and that amazing banana pudding and sweet potato pie.

Unfortunately, in 2007 due to the economic downturn and poor health, Mr. Copeland had to close. Mr. Copeland always dreamed that one day he would make a comeback to the food business that he loved so much. He was a great teacher and mentor to those in need of a trade to make a decent living, Mr. Copeland trained many into the restaurant business. Even people coming out of prison with no real job options could depend on him for a professional introduction into the culinary arts.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Calvin Copeland, a Harlem Mainstay was there when rioters burned and looted stores in 1964, when crack cocaine and HIV/AIDS tore families apart, when brownstones were for sale for \$50,000 and few outsiders dared move in. He endured fire and financial ruin, yet each time he picked up the pieces and prospered, as bold and resilient as the neighborhood around him. If he could be the master of his fate, he would live out his days in Harlem. Please join me and