

against tyranny and for their homeland. In the words of the Texas Declaration of Independence, the people's government had been "forcibly changed, without their consent, from a restricted federative republic, composed of sovereign states, to a consolidated central military despotism."

The Texas Revolution proved the bonds of freedom are stronger than ethnicity, as many Tejanos and Texians sacrificed their lives for Texas' freedom at the Battles of Gonzalez, Bexar, Goliad, the Alamo, and San Jacinto. The war was not between Anglos and Hispanics, it was a struggle between all Texans and the unjust military dictatorship of Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana in Mexico City. Texians and Tejanos knew then what we know now—freedom requires sacrifice.

Texas culture places high honors on heroes willing to sacrifice their lives for a better life for their fellow man, and Texans are known around the world as an honorable people who respond to the call of duty. While our young people are answering today's calls of duty, we should not forget those who have bravely answered that call in the past.

With an understanding of where they came from, future Texans will continue to respond to calls to service, and Texans will continue to be respected and admired around the world.

HONORING THE LIFE OF
BENJAMIN HOCHFELD

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Mr. Benjamin Hochfeld, who tragically passed away on November 24, 2014 at the young age of 43. A passionate family man and public servant, Mr. Hochfeld was a prominent member of the Western New York community.

Mr. Hochfeld touched many lives of various groups in Western New York. While working for Erie County Department of Environment and Planning and the County Attorney's office, he earned the respect and became close with many public officials and employees. He was a prominent figure in Buffalo's music community and an advocate for beautifying the Elmwood Village. His reach to members of the community was many and varied.

Mr. Hochfeld had many passions in his life, but his first love was of music. From a young age Mr. Hochfeld began studying piano and guitar. His passions led him to attend The Berkley College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts, where he further developed his craft. When he returned home to Buffalo, he continued his passion and played with several local bands, most notably with "Necktie Tour-niquet."

Mr. Hochfeld's passions continued with his endearment for gardening. Influenced by his loving wife Tracey, he spent hours beautifying the garden by her side. Their prized garden was featured during Buffalo's famous Garden Walk of 2014. Mr. Hochfeld hand crafted a stone fountain at the center of their garden that helped attract individuals from all over the country to view their garden. Here is an account written for the Buffalo Rising paper by a neighbor of Mr. Hochfeld.

When I first purchased my house on Norwood Avenue, almost 20 years ago, people told me that I was nuts. Upon moving in, the first thing that I noticed in the back "yard" of my house was a number of discarded purses (from purse snatchings) and gang graffiti tags.

Over the years my neighborhood has seen a drastic turnaround. It started with Elmwood Avenue rebounding, which in turn made the intertwined residential neighborhoods more desirable. Avenues and streets such as Norwood truly began to shine when home owners started to plant gardens, paint houses, and replace their front porches. Organizations such as Garden Walk contributed to the movement. Slowly but surely a healthy community began to take hold.

RECOGNIZING DR. BEVERLY
WALKER-GRIFFEA AS SHE IS IN-
STALLED AS THE SEVENTH
PRESIDENT OF MOTT COMMU-
NITY COLLEGE AND FOR HER
COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC EX-
CELLENCE

HON. DANIEL T. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I ask the United States House of Representatives to join me in recognizing Dr. Walker-Griffea, President of Mott Community College, for her unwavering commitment to academic excellence and student success.

Dr. Walker-Griffea is the first female and first African American president in Mott Community College's history. A native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Dr. Walker-Griffea holds a Doctorate of Philosophy in Child Development from Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas, a Master of Education in Guidance and Counseling from Virginia State University in Petersburg, Virginia, and a Bachelor of Science in Journalism and Broadcasting from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Dr. Walker-Griffea has demonstrated a passion for ensuring all students have access to quality, affordable, and effective learning experiences. As a long-time advocate for collegiate student success, Dr. Walker-Griffea has served community college students in various capacities for twenty years. Her long history in education includes serving as Vice President of Student Affairs at Thomas Nelson Community College in Hampton, Virginia; Dean of Student Development at Houston Community College-Central Campus; and Interim Dean of Health and Environmental Sciences at Spokane Community College.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud Dr. Beverly Walker-Griffea for her strong leadership and unyielding commitment to academic success and our community.

HONORING MRS. JENNIFER
VIDLER AND THE 2015 WISE HON-
OREES

HON. JEB HENSARLING

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, for 12 years, the greater Mesquite area has embraced the opportunity to honor many exceptional women in the community through the Women in Service and Enterprise (WISE) Award Luncheon and Style Show. Today I would like to honor this year's award recipient, Mrs. Jennifer Vidler, who is a shining example of a committed community advocate and servant. I would also like to recognize honorees Beth Gaddis, Debbie Jacobson, and Linda Pimentel for their valuable service and commitment to their community.

Jennifer Vidler has lived in Mesquite most of her life. She is a graduate of North Mesquite High School and proudly served in the United States Air Force as a Specialist. Afterwards, she studied cosmetology and graduated with a perfect score through the state board of exam. Her salon has been a Chamber of Commerce member for 15 years, and voted best salon several times. Jennifer has been a member and chairwoman for the Board of Adjustments for six years and now she is a Planning and Zoning Commissioner. She has been Vice President and then President of Old Town Mesquite/Community Heart of Mesquite. For the last nine years Jennifer has worked very hard with the fundraising, planning, and implementing of Kid Fish and Pumpkin Fest. For many years Jennifer led the decorations for Christmas on the Square by herself, before a few people came to help. She has worked hard to bring a Farmers Market to Mesquite, and this year will be the 2nd Annual Farmers Market on the Square. Jennifer says, "I truly love Mesquite and think it can only be even better."

Past WISE Award winners have served in a variety of ways, but they are united by the long-lasting impact they have made on their community. Their service, community involvement and dedication to enterprise continue to inspire younger generations.

Today, I would like to recognize all of the WISE honorees for their outstanding service and congratulate them on their awards. Thank you, ladies, for helping make our community, state, and country a better place.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 60TH AN-
NIVERSARY OF THE DENVER RE-
GIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERN-
MENTS

HON. DIANA DeGETTE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Ms. DeGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor one of Colorado's most respected and valued organizations, the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), on its 60th anniversary. Through collaborative cooperation, DRCOG speaks and leads with one voice while serving nine counties and 47 municipalities, and it stands as one of the three oldest

Councils of Government in the country. DRCOG serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Denver metropolitan region, skillfully serving nearly three million citizens in three broad-based areas: Regional Growth and Development, Transportation & Personal Mobility, and Aging & Disability Resources.

Currently, local governments are represented in a cooperative and comprehensive multi-modal transportation planning process for the entire region while incorporating state and federal practices and regulations. The Denver Regional Council's Mobility and Access Council (DRMAC) ensures people with mobility challenges have access to the community by increasing, enhancing, sharing, and coordinating regional transportation services and resources with a vision of mobility and access for all.

DRCOG's Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) has worked with the Department of Housing and Urban Development while leveraging the multi-billion dollar FasTracks transit system expansion already in place. The SCI just concluded its collaborative partnership of governmental, public and private-sector organizations to support the planning and implementation of its ideas to foster greater access to more economically diverse, multi-modal communities that will put less strain on our natural resources.

Now in its 40th year as the designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA), DRCOG helps people live independently as long as possible in their own homes and communities. DRCOG contracts with community-based agencies to provide a broad continuum of services addressing the needs of the region's booming population of older adults and those living with disabilities. In coordination with other stakeholders, the AAA helps ensure that community leaders are aware of the needs of older adults, the benefits of community-based services, and the costs to taxpayers of failing to address needs of seniors in the region.

DRCOG has a long list of accomplishments shaping the region in a way that benefits us all. From helping transition the Valley Highway to what we know today as I-25, including the T-Rex project, to the discussion about where to relocate Stapleton Airport—which we know now as Denver International Airport. DRCOG helped establish the Mile High Compact to help shape growth in the metro area in an intelligent manner and designed mechanisms to protect the region's air quality through the oversight of the Regional Air Quality Council. From funding major highway and transit projects in the region to helping with the formation of RTD, DRCOG has been involved with seemingly every major regional issue and project.

Please join me in commending DRCOG. As their motto says, they make life better.

HONORING THE LIFE OF DAVID
SANES RODRIGUEZ

HON. ALAN GRAYSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Mr. GRAYSON. Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday, April 19th, marked the anniversary of the death of David Sanes Rodriguez. He was a ci-

vilian security guard, employed by the U.S. Navy, who died 16 years ago when two errant bombs were dropped from a fighter jet near his observation post on Vieques, Puerto Rico.

His tragic death spurred protests throughout Puerto Rico and the United States, and ultimately led to the halting of bombing on the island where countless shells and chemicals were dropped.

It is unconscionable that the American government could wreak such havoc on such pristine lands for so long. It is unimaginable that it would ignore the pleas of its own citizens for decades as they called for an end to the bombing of their land.

We must ensure that Sanes Rodriguez is not forgotten, and neither is the unnecessary destruction of vast parts of Vieques during the more than 60 years of live-fire bombing practice on the island.

As we also celebrate Earth Day this week, we must acknowledge another grim reality: decades of destructive shelling turned Vieques into one of the most toxic places on the planet. In the 16 years since Sanes Rodriguez was killed, lingering environmental and health concerns due to the bombings are still not being fully addressed.

Tens of thousands of bombs and toxic chemicals were dropped on Vieques during U.S. Navy training exercises. Some of those munitions contained depleted uranium and napalm. Contamination concerns led the Environmental Protection Agency to list the former Vieques training area as a Superfund site—basically designating it as a toxic dump.

I have grilled the Director of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) about the alarming rate of cancer and other serious health conditions experienced by Viequesens as a result of the environmental damage caused by decades of military bombing. Amazingly, the agency has reported that it could not find “credible scientific evidence” to support a link between a generation of military pollutants and Vieques residents' poor health trends.

In March of 2013, I visited Vieques to witness for myself the consequences of decades of shelling and the impact it has had on the island. I met with citizens whose health has been harmed by living near the former bombing range. The people of Vieques live everyday with the legacy of the environmental destruction that was wreaked upon their land.

Sanes Rodriguez's death, while tragic and unnecessary, was not meaningless. It opened the eyes of millions of Americans to the harm being inflicted upon Vieques. Our annual remembrance of his tragic death now serves another noble cause: environmental justice for Vieques.

On this important date for the people of Vieques, and as the world celebrates Earth Day, I urge my colleagues to join me in making sure this beautiful island is restored. I urge my colleagues to join me in addressing the health problems that six decades of bombings have imposed upon the residents who still call Vieques home.

IN HONOR OF EDWARD T. “FITZY”
FITZPATRICK OF BOSTON, MA

HON. STEPHEN F. LYNCH

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Edward T. “Fitzzy” Fitzpatrick, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 2222 of Boston, MA, and to commend him for over fifty years of dedicated service to the working men and women of this community.

The son of Joseph and Ann Fitzpatrick of Mattapan, Edward was born in Boston and lived in Mattapan. Edward attended St. Margaret's School in Dorchester, MA and graduated from Hyde Park High School. During high school and after graduation, Ed began his career at New England Telephone. His career at New England Telephone was put on hold while he honorably and bravely served in Vietnam.

Upon completion of his distinguished service to our country, Ed continued working for New England Telephone and began to gain the respect and admiration of his co-workers while fighting for their rights on the job. His leadership skills were evident and he was instrumental in the achievements of the IBTW and helped form the foundation for the move from the independent IBTW to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the charter of Local 2222. Local 2222 became well-known in the local labor movement and in political circles in Boston's working-class neighborhoods.

Ed held many positions in Local 2222 for many years including shop steward, chief steward, vice president and business agent. He became president of the Local in 1991 and held that position for 24 years until his retirement in March of 2015.

He is well-known for fiercely leading Local 2222 and 60,000 workers through a four month strike in 1989 that was one of the largest and most contentious union/management battles in decades. From the back of a pickup truck with a loudspeaker, Ed motivated thousands to stand strong on the picket line and to battle for their rights and their families through one of the most successful strikes in U.S. history with his hallmark saying “Hang Tough.” The striking workers in 1989 successfully resisted management demands and won health care coverage for all telephone workers in Boston.

Aside from being a fierce union leader, Ed is mostly known for his incredible dedication to those afflicted by drug and alcohol addiction. A legendary figure in Local 2222's “Membership Assistance” program, Ed's personal interventions and time has saved the lives, marriages, and phone company careers of countless workers caught in the grip of substance abuse. He has devoted his own personal time, day and night, to families and individuals struggling with addiction. He believes the most valuable thing you can give to another human being is your time and Fitzzy makes the time for anyone in need. He not only works with the members of his union and their families but also spends three nights a week visiting and bringing the message of hope to the incarcerated in three local prisons.