MR. SPEAKER. Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise today to pay tribute to Sister Miriam Thomas, S.C., a phenomenal individual who has devoted her life to enhancing the lives of others. After her 50 years of ceaseless work to educate and counsel others, and improve the communities she lives in, I take great pride in honoring Sister Thomas’s 50th anniversary of service to God and humanity with this congressional tribute.

Sister Thomas was born and received her early education in South Brooklyn. Upon graduation from high school, Sister Thomas answered the calling to devote her life to God. At the age of 18 she entered Sisters of Charity where she received an invaluable theological education as well as a degree from Mount Saint Vincent College in the Bronx. Once she professed her vows, Sister Thomas brought her newly-honed ministry skills to Ascension Grammar School in Manhattan, where she remained for 8 years. She then relocated to Ponce, Puerto Rico where her education was enriched at Catholic University. At this point, with more years of training and instruction, she was ready to take on the South Bronx. There, she was assigned to St. Athanasius Parish where she has shared her gift of easing souls and invoking smiles for the past 39 years.

Mr. Speaker, in 1972, Sister Thomas, along with her neighbors, heard that a woman who served as the administrator of Simpson Street Development Association was murdered while on the job. Courage and an unfaltering sense of devotion allowed Sister Thomas to stand up and fill this important position. There, with a tireless and supportive staff, Sister Thomas works miracles daily by providing social services and emotional guidance to people in need. Beyond these commitments, Sister Thomas also sits on the South Bronx Community Board 2 as chairperson. Her involvements in other community-based organizations are too numerous to mention. She says that her ceaseless community involvement was inspired by Father Louis Gigante, a visionary and dear friend.

Chairman Spence knew that freedom isn’t free and deeply believed that lasting peace could best be achieved through unquestioned strength. He pushed for better funding for training, modernization, readiness and quality of life initiatives. His leadership was instrumental in finally stemming the tide of declining defense budgets and placing our military on the road to recovery. The soldier enjoying his new pay raise, the military families moving into improved post housing, the pilot stepping into a much-needed new fighter jet—each of these people, and many others, can thank Floyd Spence for fighting for them. We would be well-advised to continue along the path to recovery that this remarkable man worked so hard to put us on.

An old historian once noted that, “Great men are not often good men.” Well, Floyd Spence was certainly both. Those of us who have had the great opportunity to know him are far better for the privilege.