

United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Sara on receiving this esteemed designation, thanking those at Business Record for their great work, and wishing each member of the 2016 Forty Under 40 class a long and successful career.

ESSAY BY INGRID WU

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to interact with some of the brightest students in the 22nd Congressional District who serve on my Congressional Youth Advisory Council. I have gained much by listening to the high school students who are the future of this great nation. They provide important insight from across the political spectrum that sheds a light on the concerns of our younger constituents. Giving voice to their priorities will hopefully instill a better sense of the importance of being an active participant in the political process. Many of the students have written short essays on a variety of topics and I am pleased to share them with my House colleagues.

Ingrid Wu attends Clements High School in Sugar Land, Texas. The essay topic is: What makes the political process in Congress so challenging?

One of the most challenging aspects of Congress is developing efficient communication. In our current political bill making process, as bills are passed along, discussed, voted, and decided on like a game of telephone. It may lose momentum and the vigor of one bill at the beginning of its life cycle wanes as time passes and it gets reviewed and revised over and over. Of course, when it comes to dealing with the laws of the country, everything should be reviewed with scrutiny; however, maintaining the life behind a bill is also important and a hard job of Congress.

Additionally, Congress is also met with difficulties regarding opposing opinions. In our current era, politics is something that is increasingly gaining popularity. We see it on TV talk shows, highway billboards, school posters, and even on daily consumer products. With America's two major parties—Republicans and Democrats—having such a profound influence on the opinions of society and, thus, politics, much is hindered. For example, just recently, Congress was met with the challenge of repealing the Affordable Care Act and, through this, the clash of ideals and beliefs caused the process to be in a standstill. Visibly, the repeated efforts of Congress went to vain. In recent years, the number of bills passed has been continuously decreasing. Compromising both sides of the political spectrum and creating a bill to encompass the beliefs if both sides is a necessary and difficult responsibility of Congress. One reason why such a situation is happening may be partially due to either the processes and weight of Congressional action but also the unwillingness of both branches and the party backing the majority of both the cede in some areas and the lack of constraints, especially time constraints.

Finally, another challenge of Congress is to understand the people's wants and needs, for understanding these subjects is a way to foresee which ways politics should lean and what exactly needs to be done. Through many different facets, even the Congress-

sional Youth Advisory Council, Congress has taken initiatives to seek the opinions and analyze the lives of individuals on a small scale. Through similar programs of community outreach and developing the next generation, Congress has made great effort to reign in this challenge.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ILLINOIS REPRESENTATIVE DAVID LEITCH

HON. DARIN LAHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to honor Illinois State Representative David Leitch for his tireless contributions and dedication to public service in the State of Illinois.

Representative David Leitch, State Representative of the 73rd House District of Illinois and a resident of the 18th Congressional District, has dedicated nearly three decades serving his constituents in the Illinois General Assembly. His top-notch commitment to providing timely and effective constituent service to citizens has remained steadfast since he was sworn into office 27 years ago.

Representative Leitch has built a statewide reputation, establishing himself as a leader in matters pertaining to our health care system and especially mental health care in Illinois.

A primary focus of his work has been advocacy for establishing a strong community-based mental health system in our state. He convened providers beginning 15 years ago to form the Central Illinois Coalition for Mental Health Recovery. Among its accomplishments are a Mental Health Court, a psychiatric residency at the University of Illinois-College of Medicine in Peoria, and a Crisis Center designed to divert at-risk individuals to treatment rather than emergency rooms or jail. Most recently, he passed legislation enabling college students to allow their family to be notified in the event they are struggling with depression or suicidal thoughts and legislation which improves the inclusion of mental health services for older adults into primary care health settings. His outstanding advocacy on mental health and substance abuse issues has not gone unrecognized with accolades from the Heartland Health Services, a federally designated community health organization in Central Illinois, commending his life's work in the improvement of public health policy and his receipt of the statewide President's Award from the Community Behavioral Healthcare Association.

Outside of his advocacy on issues regarding mental health recovery, Rep. Leitch is credited with passing the first state law in the nation requiring insurance coverage for mammograms, he passed the first state law in the nation allowing for the collection of cord blood stem cells, he secured funding for the expansion of the Illinois Central College campus in East Peoria and arranged the acquisition of the ICC North campus in Peoria after the closure of Zeller Mental Health Center. Illinois Central College named the David R. Leitch Career Center in honor of his dedication to the community college. Nationally, he has received the Dr. Nathan Davis Award as State Legislator of the Year in the U.S. by the American Medical Association as well as over 75 other legislator of the year (or equivalent) awards.

Representative Leitch's steadfast work to improve the lives of citizens throughout our great state embodies the manner in which progress can be made for the greater good and citizens of Illinois. Rep. Leitch epitomizes the standard for which current—and future—public servants should strive to emulate to help improve lives within our communities.

It is with great honor that I have had the ability to call Representative Leitch not only a colleague but also a friend for many years. I want to congratulate him on his tireless advocacy for the mental health community and his dedicated service to the State of Illinois.

HONORING MIA WILLIAMS 2016 WASHINGTON STATE MIDDLE LEVEL PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Mia Williams, the principal of Aki Kurose Middle School, who has been recognized as the winner of the prestigious 2016 Washington State Middle Level Principal of the Year Award.

The Washington State Middle Level Principal of the Year Award, given by the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), recognizes middle school principals who have an extraordinary impact on their students' academic success and who make great contributions to their profession. Ms. Williams stood out among a field of other highly eligible candidates.

Ms. Williams has been the principal at Aki Kurose Middle School in Rainier Beach since 2008. Since that time, she has worked tirelessly to ensure the success of her students by listening to their needs and adjusting policy and procedures based on their recommendations. Under Ms. Williams' leadership, test scores have consistently improved across the board for Aki Kurose students and continue to improve due to her persistence and continued dedication to her students. Since her arrival at Aki Kurose, the student population has grown from 420 students to 700 students. At the same time, Ms. Williams has overseen a 50 percent reduction in student absenteeism and has made progress on closing the opportunity gap. She has carefully cultivated an environment where students feel supported and capable of reaching their full potential.

Ms. Williams was a teacher in the Seattle School District before completing the Danforth Educational Leadership Program at the University of Washington to pursue her dream of serving as a principal. Her skills were recently recognized by the Johns Hopkins University's Everyone Graduates Center, who invited Ms. Williams to the White House to participate in a panel where she shared her knowledge about effective strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I recognize principal Mia Williams for earning the Washington State Middle Level Principal of the Year Award. She is an inspiration to all.