

HONORING LYDIA STRUNK

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I agree with almost everything the Speaker just had to say, and I may repeat some of it. What I do not agree with, however, Mr. Speaker, is that we didn't notice. I noticed. My staff has noticed. My staff has not only noticed, but appreciated the extraordinary work that Lydia has done for this House—yes, for your office, yes, for the Republican side of the aisle, but for this House and for the American people.

Lydia and I have a great relationship, but probably more importantly, she has a great relationship with Shuwanza Goff, who runs the floor on our side of the aisle.

What a privilege it is to rise and say to Lydia, thank you—not as a Democrat, not as a Republican, but as an American who appreciates the role that you have played, Lydia, in making a difference. I always say that, when the House runs well, it is the staff's work. When it doesn't do so well, it is the Members' responsibility and fault. So you have been absolutely terrific.

And Jeff and Graham and Evie, I join with Speaker RYAN in saying that your mom is a great American, a wonderful human being. You know that personally. You see it every day in your own lives. But for the past 9 years, Lydia has been a presence on this floor first in the Republican Cloakroom as an assistant, later as a staffer with the Rules Committee, and then, as the Speaker just pointed out, deputy floor director for the Republican side of the aisle.

They are the majority party, so Lydia's responsibility really is institutional—not partisan, but institutional—and she has performed that in the best traditions of the best of this House.

It is a testament to Lydia's skill and professionalism that she has earned the respect not only of her own colleagues on the Republican side, but also those who work on my staff and the Democratic leader's staff on this side of the aisle. That is why, Lydia, I said we have noticed, we have appreciated it.

In many ways, Mr. Speaker, public service is a family affair for Lydia Strunk. She grew up around it when her father worked in the George H.W. Bush White House handling legislative affairs. Her dad is a good friend of mine, so perhaps I am not objective. I am also the father of three daughters, so perhaps I am not objective.

Nick Calio is one of the great people with whom I have served through the years. I think he is here in the gallery somewhere with his wife.

Thank you, Nick, for your service, and thank you for being such a wonderful example for your daughter. She has brought that same kind of cooperative, collegial, inclusive spirit to her work that you brought to yours not only working in the public sector, but also in the private sector.

Let me end. She grew up in a great State: Maryland. Again, perhaps making me more subjective than I otherwise would be.

After she began as a Cloakroom assistant, she met and later married Jeff Strunk, who then worked on Speaker John Boehner's floor staff, also very effectively and productively. And when Jeff left Capitol Hill in 2013, Lydia was promoted to take his place, a somewhat incestuous operation, but it worked extraordinarily well, Mr. Speaker.

I am grateful. We ought to all be grateful. The American people ought to be grateful for her efforts, her know-how, and the dedication she brings to the task of ensuring that our work, Americans' work, the American people's work here on this floor and on behalf of all of us can continue smoothly each day.

Lydia, thank you. We wish you the very best. We know that whatever you do, you will be extraordinarily successful in doing, and that you will be perceived by your colleagues and by those with whom you work in the same very positive and very appreciative way that we view you today. Godspeed.

 CONGRATULATIONS TO GERING
HIGH SCHOOL

(Mr. SMITH of Nebraska asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Gering High School, one of three national winners of the 2017 Samsung Solve for Tomorrow contest. The team of 19 Gering students took top honors out of thousands of entries and 10 national finalists.

It is exciting to see young innovators from western Nebraska, especially my alma mater, recognized nationally for their ideas on how to advance agriculture. The students designed a drone-powered system to reduce herbicide quantity by allowing farmers to directly target specific areas rather than spraying entire fields. I applaud each of them for their hard work and the dedication they put into their winning project.

Congratulations go to Curtis Anderson, Jonathan Blanco, Dakota Boles, Blake Brunner, Gabriele Castro, Cody Catron, Eric Crane, Jeremy Forella, Michael Haworth, Xavier Horst, Elexus Johnson, Kaiden Reinmuth, Trevor Satur, Tyler Smith, Joel Torres, Carson Wallace, Skylier Ward, Payton Welfl, Joshua Wilson, and their teacher, Mr. Justin Reinmuth.

 TODAY IS WORLD PRESS
FREEDOM DAY

(Mr. QUIGLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, today is World Press Freedom Day, a day that

deserves commemoration now more than ever.

Undermining the credibility of the free press and attempting to turn the American people against the media is reminiscent of authoritarian tactics, not the conduct of the leader of the free world. Yet the President has referred to the press as the "enemy of the people" for simply doing their job: reporting the facts and holding all of us accountable.

He has also dismissed distinguished publications as fake news, again, for simply doing their job and has threatened to change libel laws that will weaken the First Amendment, making it easier for him to attack and sue the press.

This antagonistic relationship between the President and the press is not only beneath the dignity of the office, it is also dangerous for our democracy. We have seen strongmen and autocratic countries suppress the media through intimidation and by discrediting the integrity of the very institution of journalism.

It is hard to believe that I have to say this in this country at this point in our history, but as Thomas Jefferson said: "Our liberty cannot be guarded but by the freedom of the press, nor that be limited without danger of losing it."

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HARPER). Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

 MATKINS FLOWERS AND GREENHOUSE
CELEBRATES 90 YEARS
IN BUSINESS

(Mr. WOMACK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WOMACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a small business in my district that is celebrating its 90th anniversary this week.

Matkins Flowers and Greenhouse in Bentonville, Arkansas, has served the northwest Arkansas region since 1927, when Henry Lenny Matkins, Sr., founded the company. Throughout the last nine decades, this Arkansas small business has persevered in good times and bad, and it serves as an example of how you make a small business sustainable with integrity, accountability, and hard work.

Working through the Great Depression, World War II, and the modern era, the Matkins family has continuously exhibited the importance of the family-owned small business to the American economy. Now in its fourth generation of leadership with Jim and his son Jeff, it is worth celebrating this important milestone.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to represent this outstanding family and offer my thanks and admiration for the success of Matkins Flowers and Greenhouse.