

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RIVIERA THEATRE

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Riviera Theatre, a historical landmark in North Tonawanda, New York. This past December, the Riviera celebrated 90 years of bringing a multitude of performing arts, including live concerts, theatre, dance shows, and movies to Western New York.

Originally known as the Twin Cities Rivera, the theatre was built during the year 1926, by the Yellen Family. The architects Leon H. Lempart and Son drew the plans, which were patterned after the Italian Renaissance. The theatre changed multiple times over the years but is currently owned and run by Riviera Theatre and Organ Preservation Society.

Opening night was December 30, 1926, a gala event, which featured the movies "Upstage" starring Norma Shearer, "The Mona Lisa", in Technicolor, a short comedy, and the newsreel. Organist Fred Meyer accompanied the films and soloed at the Mighty Wurlitzer organ.

Perhaps the Riviera is best known for housing a Wurlitzer Theatre organ, made nearby at the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company of North Tonawanda. In 2008, the organ was re-voiced and restored to nearly original condition, providing a new symphonic sound for concerts and events. The Riviera's Mighty Wurlitzer has provided more entertainment consistently in its original setting than most other theatre organs, nationwide. Many of the top name artists in the country have performed here in hundreds of concerts over the past 35 years.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Riviera Theatre is currently in the planning stages of an Expansion and Development Project (Set The Stage) that will add 23,000 square feet of new space including a black box theatre, a new lobby and new modern amenities for their patrons and performers. It is estimated when completed an additional 50,000 visitors will attend annually.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me a few moments today to recognize the heritage of the Riviera Theatre and to celebrate its 90th Anniversary. I wish them well in their continuing expansion as the Buffalo community is fortunate to have a building with such a historical background and which promotes performing arts.

TRANS TOWN HALL

HON. KEITH ELLISON

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, recently, I sat down with a number of activists in Minnesota

to talk about how LGBTQ folks, and especially trans people, are fighting for basic economic rights in a world that belittles, excludes, and dehumanizes them.

The transgender community is more visible than ever. Leaders like Laverne Cox, Caitlyn Jenner, and Janet Mock have become icons for the future of the LGBTQ movement. And in my hometown of Minneapolis, my dear friend Andrea Jenkins just received the democratic endorsement for City Council. She will be the first out trans person to hold office in Minnesota.

But this increased visibility hasn't improved the lives of all transgender people.

Compared to other states, Minnesota's transgender community is a lot safer and healthier. But that's not saying much. Nationwide, violence against trans people—and trans women in particular—is at an all-time high. Even in deeply progressive Minneapolis, my constituent CeCe McDonald was attacked outside a bar and imprisoned in a men's prison for 19 months for defending herself.

This sort of violence has far-reaching repercussions—high unemployment, difficulty accessing lifesaving healthcare, housing instability, and educational barriers. And we need to stop thinking of these injustices as separate from our economic lives.

To get a better understanding about how trans folks are living in the 21st century, I attended Minnesota's LGBTQ Lobby Day in April and hosted a town hall forum. I'll tell you—it's not easy. It takes a lot of courage to hold space for your truth. My friend Kye kicked off the testimony with a story about how important simply accepting people's identities are:

For many young trans people, growing up and going through elementary school, junior high, high school, and even college can be extremely difficult. And these folks don't always have the support system they need. Many talked about the deep opposition they faced from their families.

But it doesn't end there. There's difficulty finding work too. And even when trans people do find work, they can be subjected to cruel behavior from customers and even their own colleagues.

Now most American get their health insurance through their employers. But there are no protections to ensure that trans people can have the medically necessary care covered. This extends to our service members too. But there are also issues of racism and people being excluded because of their disabilities.

Listening to these very real struggles, I get upset thinking about how much time we have to spend convincing others to treat trans people as equals. It's clear we still have a lot of work to do, including in places that are seen as more tolerant to the LGBTQ community. I don't always know the right words, and I don't always get everything right when talking about this issue. And that's okay—I'm not trans. I do not have that experience. What's important is that I listen, that I hear and accept what my trans friends and colleagues are telling me.

And that I do the work they ask me to do. That is how you build a movement of generosity and inclusion.

Thanks to OutFront Minnesota and the Minnesota Transgender Health Coalition for their help coordinating this town hall. But more importantly, thank you to those who shared their stories.

The following are excerpts from various LGBTQ activists I recently invited to a town hall forum:

Kye Allums: I was a sophomore in High School. I was unaware of all things transgender and had no words to describe who I was. Constantly fighting with my mom to prove I liked who I liked, and that I would rather wear basketball shorts instead of a dress. I was invisible; never validated or affirmed. My mom let it be known that she was the one who defined me. I was her daughter; I was her girl. Until one day I went with her to meet a friend. We walked up to his office and he asked my mom, "Is this your son? He's a lot taller than I remember." In my mind I was like, "Yes!" Before my mom could say anything, I quickly replied, "Yup that's me. I'm her son." That moment, I was seen; I was seen by somebody, and that somebody was Congressman Keith Ellison.

Aaron Dotta: I am a co-president of the GSA at St. Paul Academy, which is a private school in St Paul. Something I want to point out is, because our parents have resources to send us to a private school, we are able to be educated in a community that supports us, and we are able to be GSA presidents and we are able to push for things such as gender neutral bathrooms, which we now have in our school. What we wanted to say is, this privilege of being able to push for equality and have our identities be recognized, should not be limited to private schools. Students at all schools, including public schools, should be able have their own GSAs and their identities recognized by their administration, teachers and peers. Also as gender queer youth, we do face a lot of hardship when it comes to choosing colleges, when it comes to trying to finding summer jobs. We have to think about what names we put on our applications, and resumes. Looking at schools where we will hopefully be able to spend four years and get a college degree, we have to carefully think about what places in the country and what schools will be friendly to our identities, so that we can focus on getting an education without having to worry about our indent threatening our safety and our mental health.

Leo Bukovsan: Most of my college decision making was based on where I wouldn't get kicked out of school. As a female to male transgender person, figuring out where I could be housed, where I could be safe, basically, and that really was tough, making those decisions. Because I'm in a privileged situation where I can choose where I go to college pretty well, based on all those kinds of things, I still have to make sure that I'm going to be safe.

Zaylore Stout: I live in St Louis Park. I'm a board member for RECLAIM!, which provides mental health services to transgender and gender non-conforming youth. Locally, I'm a member of the Allies of St Louis Park, which is an advocacy group that started right after the election, in regards to working towards progressive issues. Today I'm

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