

also from the United Way was Brian Whitney and Kerry Conaghan; Ron Johnson, CEO of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Family Services Inc. in Springfield; Andrea Marion, executive director of Lorraine's Soup Kitchen; Shannon Rudder, executive director of Kate's Kitchen in Holyoke; Betty Medina Lichtenstein, founder and executive director of Enlace de Familias in Holyoke; Mindy Domb, executive director of the Amherst Survival Center; and Neftali Duran, the chef and food activist at Nuestras Raices in Holyoke;

The musicians who kept us entertained along the way: the Expandable Brass Band, Double Edge Theatre, and Hopkins Academy Band;

Western Massachusetts small businesses, including: BridgeSide Grille; Magpie Pizza; Ashfield Lake House; Union Station in Northampton; Berkshire Brewing Company, who kept us nourished along the way; Ben Clark of Clarkdale Fruit Farms; and Tea Guys of Whately, Massachusetts, for their wonderful tea in honor of the march, and for their continued generosity and friendship;

The Sheriff's Departments in Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties, as well as the Deerfield Police helped provide escorts for us during the entire 43 miles.

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I am grateful to Mr. Michael Brooks and the students of Smith Vocational School in Northampton for making the shopping carts we used during the march.

I am grateful to the countless students—elementary, middle school, and high school students—who raised money and greeted us along the way; members of the Tibetan community who greeted us as well; and all the other incredible individuals from our community who joined us on the march, like my dear friends Chia Collins, Steve “the Hippie” Fendell, Georgiann and Rick Kristek, Kristen Elechko, Erin McKeown and Emily Lichter from the Ashfield Lake House, and so many others; as well as industry partners who helped support this effort through their generosity.

I want to thank two of my wonderful district staffers, Keith Barnicle and Seth Nadeau, for their efforts in helping to organize the march and for assisting me every step of the way.

Lastly, I want to thank my son, Patrick, who marched with me by my side during this entire time.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to join so many of my constituents and neighbors in western Massachusetts to bring attention to the issue of hunger and raise much-needed funding for The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

I am so honored to be part of this march each year, but I need to remind my colleagues in this Chamber that charities alone cannot end hunger. To do that, it will take further investments in our federally funded programs like SNAP, WIC, and school meals.

As we look toward the next farm bill, the next budget, and the upcoming appropriations cycle, I plead with my colleagues to maintain and increase investments and programs to help those struggling with food insecurity. Please don't do anything to make hunger worse in this country.

In the United States of America, the richest country in the history of the world, it is a disgrace that any child goes to bed hungry, that any senior has to choose between lifesaving medication and a decent meal, that any veteran who risked his or her life in the defense of our Nation doesn't have enough to eat, and that any individual suffers from hunger. But, still, 42 million Americans remain food insecure.

Food is a right, and it is up to this Congress to finally take a stand in supporting efforts to end hunger now.

#### EXPRESSING GRATITUDE TO IGOR BIRMAN, CHIEF OF STAFF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. McCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my gratitude to my chief of staff, Igor Birman, who will be leaving the House of Representatives on December 5 to begin a new career in financial management. He and his wife, Kim, are expecting their first child in April and will be moving to New York.

Igor Birman's story sums up the best of America and is testimony to the exceptionalism of American founding principles, how they beckon to oppressed people around the world, and how much those who come here legally bring to our Nation.

Igor was born in Moscow to parents who desperately yearned for the fundamental rights they were denied in the Soviet Union. At the time, they were called refuseniks, Russian Jews persecuted for their religious beliefs and denied exit visas because of their technical knowledge.

Finally, after many years, as the Soviet Union began to collapse, glasnost opened an opportunity for the Birmans finally to realize their dream. Igor remembers hurriedly learning English on borrowed phonograph records. A week before their departure, the family returned to their tiny apartment to find the place upended by a last-minute KGB raid. Igor's mother comforted her children by saying: “In a few weeks, we will be in America, where this can never happen.”

Igor was 14 when they arrived in California to begin a new life. He entered UC Davis, where he quickly rose to public prominence after a column he had written expressing his libertarian views was censored by the politically correct apparatchiks on the campus newspaper. The irony wasn't lost on anybody, and it became a prominent story on northern California talk radio.

That is where I first became aware of Igor, and that year, I was fortunate to have him work in my State senate office as an intern. He left to attend law school, and when he returned, he did an amazing job as my finance director in a hard-fought campaign for Congress in 2008. Hiring him as my chief of staff was the easiest decision I have ever made in my years in public office. He came to Washington at the age of 28—I believe the youngest chief of staff then serving.

He has ably run my congressional office for nearly a decade, and during those years, he has assembled the most competent team I have ever had the honor to serve with. I have found his judgment impeccable, his insight keen, and his honesty and integrity spotless.

Charles de Gaulle famously observed that the cemeteries are filled with indispensable men, but General de Gaulle had never met Igor Birman. I can say definitively some people truly are indispensable, and Igor is one of them.

I am obviously not the only person to hold this opinion. The founder of Cablevision saw these same qualities in him and, beginning next week, he will be placing his operations and foundations in Igor's capable hands.

Igor once ran a very credible race for Congress himself, and I hope that he will not give up on his ambition to serve our Nation. I believe a time may be coming when Americans may lose the memory of freedom and they will need to turn to leaders like Igor for a passionate reminder of just how valuable a commodity is our freedom.

“There is a time to every purpose under Heaven,” and for now the time has come for Igor and Kim to enjoy their new family, to enjoy the fruits of their new labors, and to embark upon a promising future together. I wish them the very best in their many happy years ahead.

#### NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. O'HALLERAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. O'HALLERAN. Mr. Speaker, today is the final day of National Native American Heritage Month.

I rise today to honor and celebrate the rich history and traditions of Native Americans and to note the work we are doing in Congress to invest in infrastructure, education, and healthcare across the entire Indian Country.

It is an immense privilege to work with Tribal communities across Arizona's First Congressional District. With more than 12 Tribes and nations in my district, I see the impact of Native American heritage in every town I visit, especially their strong commitment to family, community, and traditions—traditions, by the way, that people from all around the world come to see every year.