

the country celebrated the centennial Republic Day on May 28 of this year.

Since first declaring independence from the Russian Empire in 1918, Azerbaijan sought to be an example for new nations by adopting a National Charter granting all citizens within its borders full civil and political rights, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, or gender. The United States was quick to recognize and support Azerbaijan in 1918 and again in 1991, as Soviet dominance over the country ended.

Since then, Azerbaijan has continued to be an ally and partner to the United States, notably being among the first to provide comprehensive and unconditional assistance following the September 11 terrorist attacks. Azerbaijan continued to support the Global War on Terror efforts in Afghanistan, providing airspace to NATO jets en route to Afghanistan, and ground transport for non-lethal supplies in the region. Notably, Azerbaijan is one of the few Muslim-majority countries that enjoys strong relations with Israel, and it is this commitment, not just to the United States, but also her allies, that shows Azerbaijan's continued dedication to remaining a trusted and close friend to democratic nations across the globe.

Azerbaijan continues to be a leader in promoting global energy security. Once completed, the Southern Gas Corridor project will provide European markets access to natural gas in the Caspian Sea, allowing our European allies to diversify their energy sources, while bypassing Iran. This access is crucial to maintaining energy security in the region and promoting global trade opportunities for the United States and its allies.

Mr. Speaker, I would again like to thank the people of Azerbaijan for their continued partnership and friendship, and ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Azerbaijan on this historic centennial Republic Day.

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LAMAR SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES RECOGNIZED FOR 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

**HON. PETE OLSON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 5, 2018*

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Beverly Richard, Helen Daniels and Lydia Torres for their 40 years of service and dedication to the Lamar Consolidated Independent School District (CISD).

Beverly, Helen and Lydia have each worked for the school district for forty years. They were recently recognized by Lamar CISD for their dedication to our children and our schools. Their tenure and commitment to educational excellence is a true asset in our region.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, congratulations again Beverly Richard, Helen Daniels and Lydia Torres on 40 years with Lamar CISD. I thank them for their commitment to education and to our kids.

HONORING BARRY BENDER

**HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 5, 2018*

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, communities find their strength in the dedicated individuals who offer their time and talent to benefit the greater good. For the past 18 years, Barry Bender has been one of those people regularly making selfless contributions to the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, or Bayit community.

Barry's service to the Bayit began as a natural extension of his Jewish professional life, conducting Jewish educational experiences throughout the U.S. and Canada using technology and multimedia.

He has brought his creativity and technical skills to many Bayit events and activities including the annual dinner, and to the video production and broadcast of the annual Selichot concert.

As an award winning amateur photographer, Barry is often seen around the Bayit with his camera documenting Shul life. He has given classes on a variety of topics including "Jewish Meditation," and "The Seven Days of Creation Through the Eyes of Science." He is also a proud member of the Bayit's Community Security Service (CSS) Team.

Barry's real claim to fame at the Bayit though is being a second generation shul lollipop man, continuing in his father zt"l's footsteps. His dedication to our community is a direct result of the values his parents taught him by example.

On June 3, 2018, at their 44th Annual Journal Dinner, the Bayit is honoring Barry Bender with their Community Service Award. I want to echo their recognition by extending my gratitude to Barry for all he has done to enrich the lives of those around him. This honor is extremely well-deserved.

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INTRODUCTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS VACANCY REDUCTION ACT

**HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON**

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 5, 2018*

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today, I introduce the District of Columbia Courts Vacancy Reduction Act. This bill would allow local District of Columbia court nominees to be seated after a 30-day congressional review period unless a resolution of disapproval is enacted during that period. Currently, nominees cannot be seated without affirmative Senate approval. The congressional review process for nominees would be the same one used for legislation passed by the D.C. Council. It is therefore a reliable process, long-recognized by Congress. My bill is prompted by the unique requirement that judges for the local D.C. courts be confirmed by the Senate, where nominees for the federal courts, understandably, get the primary focus and priority. There is currently an urgency facing the District's criminal and civil justice systems, and the D.C. courts have raised serious concerns due to longstanding vacancies.

Whether under Democratic or Republican control of the Senate, the local D.C. courts

regularly face vacancy crises, which harm the operations of the judicial system in the District. Congress created the D.C. Judicial Nomination Commission (JNC) to recommend candidates, and Congress should generally defer to its judgment. This bill is a compromise, useful to all concerned, that retains a congressional role while saving the Senate time by removing the need for committee and floor action and increasing the odds that D.C. will have a full complement of local judges.

Currently, there are 10 vacancies out of 62 authorized judges on the D.C. Superior Court and two vacancies out of nine authorized judges on the D.C. Court of Appeals. In the current Congress, only one judge has been confirmed.

Both pre- and post-home rule, the District has never had control over the nomination and approval process of local D.C. judges. My bill would not alter the role of the JNC or the President in the nomination process. Under the Home Rule Act, the JNC recommends to the President a list of three persons for each vacancy on the Superior Court and Court of Appeals. The President must nominate a candidate recommended by the JNC within 60 days to the Senate for advice and consent. If the President fails to nominate such a person within 60 days, the JNC must nominate a recommended person directly to the Senate for advice and consent. The Senate has no obligation to provide its advice and consent. Under this bill, once a name has been transmitted to Congress, the nomination would be deemed approved unless a resolution of disapproval is enacted into law during a 30-legislative-day review period.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

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TRIBUTE TO MARIA A. THOMSON

**HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 5, 2018*

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the life and achievements of Maria A. Thomson who was a tireless lifelong leader and advocate for the community of Woodhaven, Queens which she dearly loved. On January 10th of 2018, Mrs. Thomson passed away, leaving behind a lifelong legacy of community service and civic engagement. She earned the respect of city and state leaders, in fact she was known as the unofficial "Mayor of Woodhaven". With over 40 years of community activism, Mrs. Thomson's accolades and accomplishments are numerous. I hope to highlight some of her life's work today.

Mrs. Thomson was a dedicated public servant who cherished public safety and quality of life. Early in her career she was elected President of the 102nd Precinct Community Council, bridging the gap between law enforcement and the community. She later founded the volunteer local Civilian Patrol. As a result of her leadership, she earned the unique distinction of being the first and only civilian to be recognized as the 102nd Precinct's Honorary Police Officer of the Month. Furthermore, she annually honored the fallen heroes of 911 and our nations veterans.

To better ensure the delivery of government services to Woodhaven, she joined Queens

Community Board 9 where she served for three decades. In addition, Mrs. Thomson served as the Executive Director of the Greater Woodhaven Development Corporation for more than two decades and led the Woodhaven Business Improvement District (BID). She understood that small and independent businesses are vital to boosting the local economy, creating walk to work jobs and shaping a neighborhood's identity. Mrs. Thomson enjoyed promoting and showcasing Woodhaven's Jamaica Avenue business corridor by hosting the yearly "Wonderful Woodhaven Street Festival" and other events.

Whether she advocated for small businesses or led the fight to landmark the cherished Forest Park Carousel, her passion emanated from her strong sense of civic pride and duty. Her advocacy, passion and dedication to the betterment of Woodhaven was immeasurable. Mrs. Thomson truly set the bar for what it means to be a community activist and leader.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Maria A. Thomson's distinguished life of public service and accomplishments. Our neighborhoods are enriched because of her vision and leadership. We mourn her passing and cherish her legacy.

IN MEMORY OF CLEMENT CLAY  
"BO" TORBERT, JR.

**HON. MIKE ROGERS**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 5, 2018*

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember the life of Clement Clay "Bo" Torbert, Jr.

Bo was raised in Lee County. After graduating high school, he attended the U.S. Naval Academy and later graduated from Auburn University in 1951. At Auburn, he was a member of the school's swim team.

In 1954, Bo graduated from law school at the University of Alabama. In 1958, he was elected as a State Representative and in 1966, was elected to the Alabama State Senate. In 1976, Bo was elected as chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court where he served two six-year terms.

After serving in the Supreme Court, Torbert went on to teach at both the University of Alabama School of Law and Cumberland School of Law. He also joined the Maynard, Cooper and Gale law firm and practiced there until he retired.

Bo was an active member of First United Methodist Church in Opelika. He passed away on June 2, 2018 in Opelika, Alabama.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in remembering the life and public service of Bo Torbert. He will be greatly missed.

RECOGNIZING REVEREND JOE C.  
JOHNSON

**HON. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 5, 2018*

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to recognize a man who lived

by faith and embodied a life of stewardship: Reverend Joe C. Johnson.

The Johnson family, the family of Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church, and the broader South Florida community mourn the loss of a moral and spiritual giant.

Reverend Joe C. Johnson was one of our boldest, strongest, and most unapologetic servant-leaders. As the senior pastor of Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church for the past 41 years, Reverend Johnson has been the cornerstone of a rich and vibrant faith community.

All those who knew him had the opportunity to soak in his wisdom. I am both humbled and proud to have not only known him, but to have been able to fellowship with him and his congregation. He was a role model, a keen listener, an advisor, and a dear friend.

I will always remember him as a man of great empathy and foresight;

A man who believed that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions and cared deeply for his congregants; and

A man who worked tirelessly to better the lives of all those in our community.

My thoughts are with his wife Emma Inez, his children, grandchildren, and their entire extended family at Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church.

In the days, weeks, and months ahead, we will celebrate his life and honor his legacy. While this loss will be felt deeply by everyone, we are forever privileged to have shared this time with him on Earth.

May he rest in eternal peace.

REAFFIRMING THE COMMITMENT  
OF THE UNITED STATES TO  
TAIWAN ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
OPENING OF THE NEW OFFICE  
OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE IN  
TAIWAN

**HON. GREGG HARPER**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 5, 2018*

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Taiwan Caucus to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to Taiwan on the occasion of the opening of the new office of the American Institute in Taiwan.

The Taiwan Relations Act was signed into law on April 10, 1979, codifying the foundation to preserve and promote continued economic, cultural, and strategic bonds between the United States and Taiwan. The United States and Taiwan have forged closer economic and security relations over the years based on our shared commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and free market principles; and Taiwan's willingness to partner in efforts to combat global terrorism and to address other global challenges. The United States is now Taiwan's largest investor and its second largest trading partner. Taiwan consistently ranks as a leading trading partner of the United States and Taiwan is a strategic destination for our agricultural exports. Taiwan is a significant economic and security partner of the United States in East Asia, and we look forward to Taiwan playing a key role in our Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.

The Taiwan Relations Act further authorized the establishment of the American Institute in Taiwan to be responsible for implementing United States policy toward Taiwan as well as providing consular services to American expatriates. On June 12, 2018, the American Institute in Taiwan is scheduled to hold an inaugural ceremony for the opening of its new office in Taipei's Neihu district. This new facility is a reflection of the United States' enduring commitment to Taiwan.

Mr. Speaker, as the American Institute in Taiwan opens a new office in Taiwan, let us reaffirm that the Taiwan Relations Act and the Six Assurances are and will remain cornerstones of United States relations with Taiwan. I urge the executive branch to implement the policy set forth in the Taiwan Travel Act, which would allow United States officials to travel without restrictions to meet with their counterparts in Taiwan, and for Taiwanese officials to do likewise with respect to travel to the United States. I would like to point out the sense of Congress contained in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2018 that the State and Defense Departments' review of arms sales to Taiwan be handled in a manner consistent with standard processes and procedures for sales to other countries, and express gratitude to Taiwan for its partnership in combating global terrorism and addressing other global challenges through the Global Cooperation and Training Framework and other initiatives.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the American Institute in Taiwan on the upcoming opening of its new office in Taipei's Neihu district, and give our thanks to the Taiwanese officials who helped facilitate the site selection and construction of the facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in expressing support for a continued strong relationship between the United States and Taiwan.

CONGRATULATING THE ALVIN ISD  
TRACK AND FIELD TEAMS

**HON. PETE OLSON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 5, 2018*

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Alvin ISD high school track teams for their performance at the 2018 Texas State Track and Field Meet held at the University of Texas at Austin.

Kynnedey Flannel, of Alvin High School, broke a 37 year record, while winning first place in the girls 6A 200 meter dash. She also won gold in the 100 meter dash and will attend the University of Texas next fall. Hailey Pollard, a senior at Shadow Creek, earned a silver medal in the girls 5A discus. She will attend the University of Houston next year. Ce'cori Tolds, of Manvel High School, was awarded a silver medal in the 5A boys high jump, leaping a whole 23 feet and 7.75 inches. Sydnee Williams, a freshman at Manvel, placed second in the 100 meter hurdles for girls. The Manvel women also placed sixth in the 4x400 meter relay, featuring a team of Rayah Wynn, Taylor Harvey, Thurneisha Keys, and Ja'Daisa Sims. These student-athletes made Alvin ISD proud track and field fans.