

Harry Bajraktari soon became an Albanian-American community leader and worked hard to educate politicians, diplomats, and experts on the issue of Kosova and Albania.

The Kosovar crisis was part of the larger Yugoslavian implosion, with genocide and massive war crimes ravaging the now-dissolved country. With waves of refugees and a spreading instability in southern Europe, it was clear that American leadership was desperately needed.

Fortunately, the cause for Kosovar independence found broad bipartisan support in Congress and throughout the country. With Harry's guidance, I helped found the bipartisan Albanian Issues Caucus more than 25 years ago. I'll never forget traveling to Kosova in 1996 with Harry and raising the American flag at the opening of the United States Information Agency office in Kosova's capital, Prishtina.

Through his efforts fighting for freedom in Kosova, Harry and many of his friends in the Albanian American community came to know and work closely with leaders in the Senate and House. Across the American political spectrum, Harry led his community in meetings with key leaders, including Senator Bob Dole, Vice President Biden, MITCH MCCONNELL, Alfonse D'Amato, Tom Lantos, Susan Molinari, and many others.

In his advocacy for independence in Kosova and democracy in Albania, Harry Bajraktari contributed to community organizations, wrote-ops, met with American and international officials, testified in the U.S. Congress and spoke at many rallies. In 1991, he founded Illyria, a modern and professional Albanian-American newspaper. Based in New York, it had subscribers throughout the United States and overseas. To this day, Illyria remains a voice for Albanian-Americans and continues to inform the community and the American people.

In 1992, President George H.W. Bush issued what is known as the Christmas Warning to Milosevic, threatening military intervention if Serbia provoked a war in Kosova. In March 1999, after Belgrade's tanks rolled into Kosova, President Bill Clinton fulfilled that promise, and the United States led NATO in war against Yugoslavia. They stopped a humanitarian catastrophe and the ethnic cleansing of more than a million Albanians, and liberated Kosova.

This represented the end of the wars of Milosevic's Balkan wars and, one year later, he fell from power, ushering in a new era of relative peace and stability in the region. In 2008, Kosova became the newest independent country in Europe with the support and the recognition of the United States. It is now recognized by more than 110 nations.

Harry Bajraktari followed the example of other great Albanian-American leaders of the early 20th century like Bishop Fan Noli and Ambassador Faik Konitza, who worked to forge the special relationship and historic friendship between ethnic Albanians and the United States of America. He was also inspired by a great Albanian American leader in business and politics, Anthony Athanas, in Boston.

Harry and many others from such states as New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut, Texas, Illinois, Michigan and other states worked together and became instrumental in making the voice of Albanian Ameri-

cans heard in Washington. They founded the National Albanian American Council, which was the leading Albanian American organization in Washington, D.C. for many years.

Although Metë Bajraktari passed away in 1998 and did not live to see his dream of a free and independent Kosova come true, his family continues remember him as they continue to fight for their homeland. Today, a major shopping center in Peja is dedicated to him, fifty years after he fled Belgrade's oppression. That shopping center stands strong in the heart of the city and I am honored that a street in my name borders that facility.

For his great work in support of Kosova's independence, advocacy for democracy in Albania, and human rights throughout the Balkans, Harry Bajraktari has been recognized with the highest medals and honors. These awards are high honors from the President of Kosova, the President of Albania and recognition from the White House. When the story of Kosova is finally told, let us always recall the commitment of Harry Bajraktari and his family.

Here in the United States, Harry Bajraktari is recognized for his support for humanitarian and community initiatives. He and his family are proud, patriotic, Americans with a deep gratitude for what their new home, the United States, has given to them, and, in exchange, their hard work and success has made New York and this country a better place to live.

When they arrived on these shores, the Bajraktaris were only six people. A seventh, the youngest sibling, Miftar, was born during that first year in America. Today, Harry Bajraktari is the proud father of four children and has eight grandchildren. His sister, Nuriye (Bajraktari) Osmani has four children and three grandchildren. Litafete (Bajraktari) Gega has four children and one grandchild. Hateme (Bajraktari) Nezaj has three children. Miftar Bajraktari has three children.

Metë and Ziza have passed away, but their memory lives with their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. The continued story of the Bajraktari family will live on as a singular example of achieving the American dream. And today, their vision has become a reality, and their promises have been fulfilled. Harry has told me on many occasions his family's journey to America and the opportunities afforded to them through this journey was worth their many sacrifices. These are the kind of stories and people that add depth and humanity to our country's rich heritage. And, for myself, I am proud to call Harry Bajraktari and his family close personal friends and to honor the 50th anniversary of their arrival in the United States.

RECOGNIZING CHIEF BRETT
MCVANNEL FOR HIS SERVICE IN
THE GAYLORD CITY POLICE DE-
PARTMENT

HON. JACK BERGMAN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Mr. BERGMAN. Madam Speaker, it's my honor to recognize Brett McVannel for his retirement as chief of the Gaylord City Police Department. Through his exceptional leadership and steadfast devotion to his community, Brett has become an indispensable part of Michigan's First District.

Born and raised in Gaylord, Chief McVannel dedicated nearly 25 years of his life to the people of Michigan, serving in Kalkaska and Otsego County before becoming chief in Gaylord. During his tenure Brett thrived as a leader and communicator, working productively with other local leaders and forming a familial bond in the department he oversaw. His exceptional leadership skills are reflected in the excellence of the officers who have served under him and the trust placed in him by the people of Northern Michigan. Chief McVannel's constant dedication to the public good is commendable, and the impact of his work on the people of Northern Michigan cannot be overstated.

Madam Speaker, it is my honor to recognize Chief Brett McVannel for his decades of service to the people of our state. Michiganders can take great pride in knowing the First District is home to such a devoted individual. On behalf of my constituents, I wish Brett all the best in his future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING LIEUTENANT
DANIEL SWAIM

HON. RODNEY DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lieutenant Daniel Swaim for his exceptional service to the House CAO Office of Finance's Budget, Planning and Analysis (BPA) division.

Lt. Swaim was detailed to BPA during a vital period to coordinate the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 budget formulation process and assist with execution of the House's FY 2019 resources. His superior knowledge of the federal budgeting process, keen analytical skills, and work ethic enabled BPA to mitigate its temporary personnel gaps. Lt. Swaim's efforts facilitated better insight on available resources, led to optimal decision making on allocation of funds, and ultimately enabled timely delivery of a well justified FY 2020 House Budget.

Lt. Swaim's stellar professionalism and devotion to duty reflect great credit upon himself and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in commending Lt. Swaim for his dedication and service and wish him fair winds and following seas as he embarks on his next assignment as the Commanding Officer of USCG Cutter *Sturgeon Bay*.

HONORING RONALD DELLUMS

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, we celebrate our colleague and friend Ronald Dellums at a time of historic polarization in Congress. It is a good time to remember the peace advocate who chaired the Armed Services Committee with such equanimity that he won the respect, even the friendship, of those who opposed every cause, of the many into which Ron poured his considerable talent.