

IN HONOR OF G. ROLAND VELA,
PH.D.

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2019

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the contributions of G. Roland Vela, Ph.D. to the City of Denton and the academic community. Dr. Vela is a retired professor at the University of North Texas, where he served as one of the first Latino faculty members. At UNT, he authored 75 scientific papers and books regarding Texas History. This history-maker also blazed trails as the first Hispanic member of the Denton City Council and one of the country's first Mexican-American Microbiologists. In honor of Dr. Vela's distinguished achievements, the City of Denton dedicated the G. Roland Vela Athletic Complex on May 26, 2019.

Dr. Vela was raised in San Antonio, Texas. During World War II, he joined the Texas State Guard at age fifteen and convinced his parents to sign release papers that would allow him to enlist in the U.S. Navy at just seventeen. Though the war concluded before he was assigned to a ship, the young Texan dedicated the following year of his life to the Navy in peacetime.

Following his honorable discharge from the Navy, Dr. Vela attended San Antonio Junior College. After transferring to the University of Texas at Austin, he took multiple jobs to support himself before graduating with a degree in bacteriology. In 1951, he received a scholarship for his master's degree in bacteriology, which he completed in just one year, followed by a doctorate in microbiology and biochemistry in 1963.

Dr. Vela later began a 35-year tenure as a professor at the University of North Texas in Denton, where he taught undergraduate and graduate courses in microbiology. He was chosen to be part of the American Academy of Microbiology and was named the Associate Dean of Science and Technology in the College of Art and Sciences. During his tenure at UNT, Dr. Vela oversaw the research of numerous students and mentored 20 doctoral students before retiring in 2000.

In addition to his many professional accomplishments, Dr. Vela is a public servant. He was the first Hispanic member elected to the Denton City Council, and has served on the Texas Municipal Power Agency Board of Directors as well as numerous boards and commissions.

The G. Roland Vela Athletic Complex is a fitting tribute to this remarkable North Texan. I join Dr. Vela's family, friends, colleagues, and students in celebrating this well-deserved honor.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BILLY LONG

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2019

Mr. LONG. Madam Speaker, on Monday, June 10, 2019, I was unable to vote on any legislative measures due to travel complica-

tions. Had I been present, I would have voted the following:

(Roll No. 242) H.R. 542—Supporting Research and Development for First Responders Act, had I been present I would have voted yes.

(Roll No. 243) H.R. 2539—Strengthening Local Transportation Security Capabilities Act, had I been present I would have voted yes.

(Roll No. 244) H.R. 2590—DHS Overseas Personnel Enhancement Act, had I been present I would have voted yes.

RECOGNIZING KIMBERLEE BURKS

HON. ERIC SWALWELL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2019

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the life of Kimberlee Ann Burks, on the occasion of her unexpected passing on Thursday, May 30, 2019.

Kimberlee's roots in Hayward ran deep. She was born at our very own St. Rose Hospital in January 1967. She enjoyed spending her childhood at our local landmarks, like Kennedy Park and then returned to settle in Hayward in 2015.

For the homeless populations in Hayward and Alameda County, Kimberlee was a champion. She modeled what a person could do for themselves and for other people. Regardless of whether you recently lost your job, had become a victim of the ever-increasing cost of housing in the Bay Area, or were struggling with an addiction, Kimberlee saw you as a human being first.

The Downtown Streets Team is where Kimberlee found the support that fostered her spirit for advocacy. She started as a peer advocate and peer leader where she introduced the group and its goals to those in search of support, work-experience, and secure housing in our community.

In addition to her work with the Downtown Streets Team, Kimberlee found community at Community Resources for Independent Living (CRIL), where she served as a housing search coordinator. There she served two vulnerable communities that she held dear, the homeless and the disabled through the coordination of housing search workshops.

Kimberlee volunteered throughout Hayward and Alameda County to raise awareness and restore dignity to our homeless population. Whenever she made a gain of her own in life, she was always looking for a way to help someone else.

In 2017, she came to Washington, D.C. and visited my office to represent and advocate for the needs of Alameda County's Healthcare for the Homeless program. Just days before she passed away, Kimberlee was in Sacramento with CRIL and other advocates seeking support for measures that would provide secure and stable housing and medical care for those with disabilities and older adults without access to other forms of insurance coverage.

Kimberlee led by doing. She was a force for good, and she is gone far too soon. She is survived by her mother, Barbara, and her two sons, Austin and Preston. They have my deepest condolences.

HONORING THE LIFE OF
CHRISTOPHER KELLY RAPP

HON. ABIGAIL DAVIS SPANBERGER

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2019

Ms. SPANBERGER. Madam Speaker, it is with great sadness today that I rise to honor the life of Mr. Christopher Kelly Rapp, a husband, son, musician, and public servant from Virginia's 7th Congressional District whose life was taken too early on May 31 of this year.

Friends and colleagues describe Mr. Rapp as empathetic, honest, and helpful. As a public works employee for Virginia Beach, Stafford, and Powhatan, he dedicated much of his working career to improving the lives of those around him. A man of deep faith, Mr. Rapp was also a devoted volunteer. In fact, he was scheduled to volunteer at an event to help the less fortunate on June 5th—an event which he was never able to attend.

In addition to his commitment to service, Mr. Rapp was known for the true and abiding love he possessed for his wife, Bessie. When they met, she was a travel agent and he wanted to travel the world. As husband and wife, they spent 24 years traveling it together. This abiding love also led to Mr. Rapp embracing his wife's culture by becoming an active member of Kultura Filipino. Through this group, he learned Filipino dances, empowered Pinoy children by teaching them about Filipino culture, and made his home a central location for all types of cultural communities from the Tidewater to Central Virginia.

Chris loved the experiences of life and was a life-long learner. Whether it was buying a Tagalog dictionary on his wedding day, starting piano lessons in his mid-50s, or avidly writing short stories, he capitalized on every second of life. He was renowned for his passionate performances on the bagpipe and served as a member of Greater Richmond Pipes & Drums, as well as Tidewater Pipes & Drums. These bands remember him for his love for music and eagerness to share his sound with the community.

I am heartbroken by the death of Mr. Rapp during the senseless shooting at the Virginia Beach Municipal Center. While I know that I can offer no true consolation, I offer my prayers and heartfelt sympathy to Mr. Rapp's wife, parents, family, and friends.

Madam Speaker, please join me today in commemorating the life of Mr. Christopher Kelly Rapp.

HONORING BOB COFFIN

HON. DINA TITUS

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2019

Ms. TITUS. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Las Vegas Councilman Bob Coffin on the occasion of his retirement from political life. Councilman Bob Coffin was elected to represent Las Vegas Ward 3 on Tuesday, June 7, 2011, and was sworn into office on Wednesday, July 6, 2011. Councilman Coffin has deep roots in downtown Las Vegas, having been a resident in and around Ward 3 for more than 60 years and now lives less than a mile from his boyhood home.