

youth services provider capable of reaching an ever-expanding and greatly underserved youth population.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Sports Foundation, Inc. for their steadfast dedication and years of service to our Bronx residents, and for their longstanding commitment to improving our community.

HIDDEN FIGURES CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. JOYCE BEATTY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 19, 2019

Mrs. BEATTY. Madam Speaker, Katherine Johnson, Dr. Christine Darden, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson; most people know them as the “Hidden Figures.”

Well, Madam Speaker, I think it's safe to say they are “hidden figures” no longer.

Thanks to them and many other women, we were able to reach for the stars and put a man on the moon.

We honor these brave, brilliant women. They accomplished what many thought impossible and proved—to paraphrase Katherine Johnson—that “Girls are capable of doing everything men are capable of doing. Sometimes they even have more imagination than men.”

In that spirit, I am proud to be a cosponsor of the Hidden Figures Congressional Gold Medal Act and urge all my colleagues to support this resolution.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JENNIFER WEXTON

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 20, 2019

Ms. WEXTON. Madam Speaker, I was on the floor but missed the vote on H.R. 535, the Department of Veteran Affairs Expiring Au-

thorities Act (Roll Call 536). Had I voted, I would have voted YEA.

HONORING PRESIDENT MOHAMED BEJI CAID ESSEBSI

HON. BILL FLORES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 20, 2019

Mr. FLORES. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mohamed Beji Caid Essebsi, the first democratically elected president of Tunisia, who passed away on July 25, 2019.

President Caid Essebsi was born November 29, 1926, in Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia. In 1950 he went to study law in Paris, France, and when he returned, he joined the independence movement led by future President Habib Bourguiba. Following Tunisia's independence from France in 1956, he served as Bourguiba's adviser and in his cabinet from 1957 to 1951. His posts included Chief of Regional Administration, Interior Minister, Defense Minister, and Ambassador to France.

Ten years after being sidelined for advocating for democratization, President Caid Essebsi returned to public service in 1981, serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs until 1986. In 1987, Prime Minister Zine el Abidine Ben Ali staged a bloodless coup against President Bourguiba. Under the new regime, President Caid Essebsi was appointed as Ambassador to Germany. He later returned to serve from 1990 to 1991 as the President of the Chamber of Deputies, the former lower chamber of the Tunisian parliament.

In 2010, the citizens of Tunisia took part in a campaign of civil resistance against President Ben Ali. Their demonstrations against high unemployment, food inflation, and lack of political freedom led to the eventual ouster of President Ben Ali. The Tunisian people's revolutionary success sparked a wave of protests and government overthrows across the Middle East, resulting in the Arab Spring. In the aftermath of their success, Tunisians were in need of leadership while trying to form a new and democratic form of government. In early 2011,

acting President Fouad Mebazaa appointed President Caid Essebsi, after almost 20 years of private life, as the new Prime Minister for his record of patriotism, loyalty, and commitment to democracy.

In 2011, following elections for the Constituent Assembly of Tunisia, the body charged with writing a new constitution, President Caid Essebsi left office. As the country's new constitution was being written, President Caid Essebsi founded a new political party named “Nidaa Tounes” which translates to “Tunisia's Call.” He founded this party as a democracy-oriented alternative to the Islamist Ennahda party which had recently taken power.

In early 2014, the country's new constitution was passed and ratified; followed by elections to form a new system of government. Parliamentary elections were held in October of that year and Nidaa Tounes won a plurality of the seats. The next month, President Caid Essebsi was elected as President of Tunisia in the country's first free and fair elections. During his presidency, he supported a secular society and legislation that promoted women's rights.

Last year, I had the pleasure of meeting President Caid Essebsi on a House Democracy Partnership trip to Tunisia to promote their continuing democratic progress. I enjoyed his company and was saddened to hear of his passing. It is my fervent hope that in the upcoming elections to replace him, Tunisia continues to build upon the democratic processes that he so strongly supported.

Madam Speaker, President Mohamed Beji Caid Essebsi's life was defined by his service to his country. He will be forever remembered as a husband, a father, a selfless public servant, a champion for democracy, and a friend.

My wife, Gina, and I offer our deepest and heartfelt condolences to the Caid Essebsi family. We also lift up the family and friends of President Caid Essebsi in our prayers.

As I close today, I urge all Americans to continue praying for our country, for our veterans, for our military men and women who protect us, and for our first responders who keep us safe at home.