

CONGRATULATING THE RECIPIENTS OF AFL-CIO LABOR AWARDS IN NORTHWEST INDIANA

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 11, 2019

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Madam Speaker, it is my distinct honor to congratulate several of Northwest Indiana's finest citizens. The Northern Indiana Area Labor Federation, American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO), recognized several individuals and organizations for their dedication and service during the Northern Indiana Area Labor Federation Community Labor Awards Reception, which was held at Wicker Memorial Park in Highland, Indiana, on Thursday, October 10, 2019. These individuals, in addition to all Northern Indiana Area Labor Federation members who have served Northwest Indiana so diligently for such a long period of time, are the epitome of the ideal American worker: loyal, dedicated, and hardworking.

At this year's event, Indiana State Representatives Carolyn Jackson, Ragen Hatcher, Ross Deal, Pat Boy, Chris Chyung, Lisa Beck, and Chris Campbell were the recipients of the Service to Labor Award for their outstanding support to the labor movement.

The Union Labor Award was presented to Vern Beck, President, USW Local 12775, for his selfless devotion to the labor movement through the union's promotion in all areas: social, civic, educational, and political.

Carpenters Local 1005 and President Steve Toth were recognized with the Community Services Award for enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors of Northwest Indiana through their exemplary work on behalf of the community.

Earl Cox, retired UAW member and Indiana United Way Labor Liaison of Greater Lafayette and Tippecanoe County, was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his many years of labor activism and his commitment to his community. For the exceptional service he has provided to the people of Northwest Indiana, he is worthy of our admiration and respect.

Sharon Patterson, NALC Local 1624, 1st Vice President NIALF, and Mark Slonaker, Battalion Chief, Hobart Firefighters Association Local 1641, were presented the George Meany Award for their significant contributions to the youth of their communities through their involvement with the Boy Scouts of America.

The President's Award was presented to Mike Millsap, Director USW District 7, for his dedication to the labor movement and his noteworthy service to the organization. He is truly worthy of the honor bestowed upon him.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you and my distinguished colleagues join me in congratulating these dedicated, honorable, and exemplary leaders, while commending all of the hardworking union men and women locally and throughout America. They have shown commitment and courage toward their pursuits, and I am proud to represent each of them in Washington, D.C.

CONGRATULATING MR. STANLEY BALZEKAS FOR HIS LEADERSHIP AND DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

HON. DANIEL LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 11, 2019

Mr. LIPINSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Stanley Balzekas who has been awarded the title and badge of an Honorable Nobleman by the Lithuanian Royal Society of Nobility.

Mr. Balzekas has dedicated his life to preserving and spreading Lithuanian history and culture. In 1966, Mr. Balzekas founded the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture in Chicago. Through his dedicated leadership, the museum has grown to become the largest repository of Lithuanian cultural artifacts outside of Lithuania. Mr. Balzekas's tireless work has enhanced America's understanding of Lithuanian history and enriched the culture of the Chicagoland community.

Mr. Balzekas is also an American patriot, having proudly served in the United States Army during World War II. He bravely fought in the Battle of the Hurtgen Forest, one of the longest and fiercest battles in Europe. For heroically risking his life to rescue twelve wounded soldiers, Mr. Balzekas was awarded the Bronze Star as well as the Purple Heart.

To recognize Mr. Balzekas's noble lineage and his contributions to Lithuanian culture, the Lithuanian Royal Society of Nobility conferred to him a title of nobility in his absence. The title was conferred in Vilnius, Lithuania, on July 7, 2019, the anniversary of the crowning of King Mindaugas. The Lithuanian Royal Society of Nobility strives to safeguard the traditions of the Lithuanian nation and revive the spirit of the ancient Lithuanians. The nobility award will be personally presented to Mr. Balzekas at an event in his honor in Chicago on October 11.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Mr. Stanley Balzekas on this tremendous honor. He deserves praise for the energy and time he has dedicated to preserving Lithuanian culture, as well as serving his community and country. I thank him for his service and wish him and his family the best.

IN RECOGNITION OF MARGARET "MARDEE" XIFARAS

HON. WILLIAM R. KEATING

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 11, 2019

Mr. KEATING. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the life of Margaret "MarDee" Xifaras, a passionate political activist, successful lawyer, and a beloved member of the community on the South Coast of Massachusetts.

Born in Winnetka, Illinois, MarDee first came to Massachusetts to earn her master's degree at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in Medford. Shortly after graduating, MarDee moved to New Bedford to help run Congressman Gerry E. Studds' first campaign for Congress. Though that first campaign was not successful, MarDec had nevertheless found her new home. It was there that

she would meet her future husband or forty-eight years, John Xifaras.

Continuing her education, MarDee earned a second master's degree at the former South-eastern Massachusetts University in Dartmouth and a law degree at Boston University. Soon after, she worked as an assistant district attorney, a special assistant to Governor Michael Dukakis, and later became a partner at the New Bedford law firm of Lang, Xifaras and Bullard.

With the desire to do more, MarDee worked tirelessly for the presidential campaigns of Ted Kennedy, Michael Dukakis, Bill Clinton, Al Gore, John Kerry, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, in many instances uprooting herself and moving to where she was needed most. A nearly fifty year member of the Massachusetts Democratic State Committee, her years of service to the party were deservedly recognized when MarDee was elected to the Democratic National Committee by her peers.

Possibly MarDee's greatest accomplishment, however, was the role she played in creation of the University of Massachusetts Law School. Recognizing the need for a public law school in Massachusetts, MarDee fought against private interests to ensure the school's opening. Later she would sit on the board of trustees, working tirelessly to guarantee that its commitment to the community was fulfilled.

MarDee left us too soon on October 8th, 2019, at the age of seventy-four after a long battle with breast cancer. She was an inspiration to all that met her and a mentor to many. MarDee would talk to Presidents or someone in need with the same respect and dignity. She will long be remembered far and wide for her dedication to her community and her desire to make the world a better place. In addition to her husband John, MarDee is survived by her children Dena, Juliet, Michael, her two brothers John and Jim, and six grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor the life of Margaret "MarDee" Xifaras. I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing her many years of dedication to her community.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE MICHIGAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY COUNCIL

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 11, 2019

Mrs. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Michigan Muslim Community Council. Its meaningful work across the state is worthy of commendation.

The Muslim community is an important component of Michigan's identity. Since the community's humble beginnings in the state over 100 years ago, the Muslim community in Michigan has grown significantly and today represents one of the most diverse groups in the nation. Seeing a need for greater unification among the smaller communities divided by Muslim sects, ethnicities, and races, the Michigan Muslim Community Council (MMCC) was established in 2012 through the merger of two other Muslim organizations, the Council of Islamic Organization of Michigan and the Islamic Shura Council of Michigan. Since its inception as a new, consolidated organization, MMCC has worked tirelessly to promote unity