

the area to add to its park system, seeking to discover new outdoor recreational opportunities that could enhance the quality of life for the families and residents of Wayne County.

Over the course of 100 years, the Wayne County Park System has significantly transformed. From humble beginnings in Elizabeth Park in 1919, Wayne County Parks have since become an invaluable pillar of our community, serving as spaces for community members to gather and enjoy the outdoors, compete in sports, participate in various community events, and simply have fun. Today, nearly 40 parks including nature trails, golf courses, playscapes, swimming pools, dog parks, picnic shelters, and baseball diamonds, to name a few, comprise the entire Wayne County Park System. Without a doubt, Wayne County Parks play an important role in our community and have been improving the lives of our residents for a century. Wayne County Parks truly foster inclusive, lively, and enjoyable environments where all feel welcome, and I cannot thank the Wayne County Parks System enough for its century of exceptional service to our community.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in honoring the centennial anniversary of Wayne County Parks. We are grateful for their impactful contributions to our community and wish the parks many more years of continued success.

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE
OF THE MALTA CONFERENCES

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the greatest example of science diplomacy, the Malta Conferences, their founder and president Professor Zafra Lerman, and the important work that the conferences facilitate. This year marks the ninth meeting of the Malta Conferences. The conferences help identify unique opportunities for collaboration to meet the scientific and technological challenges of the Middle East region. In the Malta Conferences, the common language of science is used for science diplomacy, which serves as a bridge to peace, tolerance and understanding.

These peace congresses have made it possible for scientists from countries that are often on opposing sides of political and cultural conflicts to meet in a politically neutral environment, where they can collaborate on solving regional problems, and forge relationships that bridge deep chasms of mistrust and intolerance. These unique gatherings draw scientists from many Middle East countries, including Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

In each of the Malta Conferences, Middle East scientists meet with science Nobel Laureates to catalyze enduring collaborations on scientific and technological problems, including water scarcity, environmental degradation, nuclear and chemical security, science and technology education for all, energy, and climate change.

The founder and president of the Malta Conferences, Professor Zafra Lerman, is my friend and constituent. Professor Lerman is a life-long champion for human rights, freedom, and peace. For more than four decades, she has worked tirelessly to promote peace and justice around the globe, especially among nations whose governments are hostile to one another.

Professor Lerman has received over 40 international awards, including the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring from President Clinton, the Royal Society of Chemistry Nyholm Education Award, the American Chemical Society George C. Pimentel Award, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Award for Science and Diplomacy, the American Physical Society Andrei Sakharov Prize, and the UN NOVUS Summit Peace and Justice Award. Professor Lerman received her bachelor's and master's degrees in chemistry at Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, and her Ph.D. from the Weizmann Institute of Science.

Despite many obstacles to success, the Malta Conferences have developed several avenues for change: Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Egypt, and Kuwait formed a working group on Drinking Water Quality Assessment in the Middle East; Palestinian students from Al Quds University in Palestine are pursuing PhD studies at Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel; a women's group was formed in order to empower women scientists across the region, and encourage young girls to pursue careers in STEM; and a unified science curriculum for the Middle East is being developed which will include climate change, chemistry, nuclear security, and ethics. More than 700 Middle East scientists and 15 Nobel Laureates are now in the network.

I would like to thank Professor Zafra Lerman and the Malta Conferences for their continued hard work to bring peace to the Middle East.

RECOGNIZING CORPORAL RONNIE
"RD" FOSTER, RECIPIENT OF
TEXAS' THIRD CONGRESSIONAL
DISTRICT 2019 CONGRESSIONAL
VETERAN COMMENDATION

HON. VAN TAYLOR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

Mr. TAYLOR. Madam Speaker, today, it is my privilege to honor twelve distinguished military veterans from Texas' Third Congressional District who answered the call to serve their Nation honorably, both in uniform and following their return to civilian life. The recipients of the 2019 Congressional Veteran Commendation exemplify the time-honored qualities of patriotism, service before self, and bold leadership. Following their time in service, their efforts in our community have earned these fine individuals recognition as the recipients of this prestigious commendation. Their stories of sacrifice will encourage future generations to pursue a life dedicated to the very values we cherish as Americans: faith, freedom, and democracy. One such hero is Corporal Ronnie "RD" Foster of Anna, Texas.

Corporal Ronnie Davenport Foster, known to his friends as "RD" served in the United States Marine Corps from 1966 to 1969. Originally from Farmersville, Texas, as the son of a WWII veteran, Ronnie's sense of patriotism was developed early on. Shortly after graduating from high school, RD would be assigned to the 1st Force Logistics Command driving resupply and gun trucks out of Da Nang, Vietnam in 1967 as a part of the "Rough Riders" motor transport Battalion. For his efforts, RD was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and Rifle Sharpshooter Badge.

In the decades that would follow, RD pursued a music career as a singer songwriter and worked as a tour bus operator for famed musicians and performers. In an effort to recognize the patriotism of our Vietnam Veterans who were often shunned upon their return from service, RD organized a concert to raise awareness and funds for the Texas Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Fair Park in the 1980s. Later, RD would embark on an extensive mission to identify all the men and women from Collin County who died while serving our Nation going back to the Great War. Upon conclusion of his painstaking research efforts, he would lobby local governmental entities and spearhead a fundraising effort to construct a Veterans Memorial to remember and honor the legacies of our fallen warriors from Collin County. In response, the City of McKinney created the Armed Services Memorial Board, of which RD was a founding member. The result was the Collin County Veterans Memorial, which was dedicated in November 2011. Further in 2013, RD cofounded the Collin County Fallen Warrior Portrait Project which has resulted in 70 portraits of fallen warriors on permanent display at the Collin County Courthouse. Corporal Foster would also organize the efforts to rename Courthouse to the Russell A. Steindam Courts Building in honor of the posthumously awarded Medal of Honor recipient. Foster's recognitions include Patriot of the Year by the Texas Veterans Commission and recognition as a recipient of the Distinguished Citizens Medal from the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Today a grateful Nation thanks Corporal Foster for his exceptional service and congratulates him on this recognition. May his steadfast example of leadership inspire others to live a life of service to a cause greater than themselves. It is my extreme honor to award him the 2019 Congressional Veteran Commendation for the Third District of Texas.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BILL FOSTER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

Mr. FOSTER. Madam Speaker, I was not present for a vote on Tuesday, October 23, 2019. Had I been present, I would have voted on rollcall No. 573, "aye."