

I extend my deepest congratulations to Oribi Manufacturing for this well-deserved recognition from Commerce City.

INTRODUCTION OF THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE FOR TRANS-ATLANTIC ENGAGEMENT (LITE) ACT

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Mr. HASTINGS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Leadership Institute for Transatlantic Engagement (LITE) Act—a bill that will create an institute to assist in strengthening ties with our allies, protect democratic institutions, and support visionary leadership on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the 116th Congress, under my leadership as chair, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission, has held events on the importance of international election observation, good governance, and focused on democratic backsliding in particular countries as part of our continued commitment to the underlying principles of the Helsinki Final Act adopted by the 57 North American, European, and Eurasian countries that make up the region of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

We identified numerous challenges in western leadership that are putting our democracies and the transatlantic partnership at risk, including as continuing disparities in wealth, health, employment, education, justice, and other sectors that lead citizens to question whether democracy can deliver. Common to among these issues is the role leaders can play in ensuring laws are equitable, transparent, and enforced; elections are free and fair; and laying the groundwork to ensure the same protections, rights, and laws, are extended to all in their constituencies.

The LITE Act will establish an institute to assist western democracies in living up to these ideals and restoring faith in democracy, by equipping transatlantic policymakers with legislative, communications, conflict resolution and other leadership tools to strengthen democratic institutions in their societies and the transatlantic relationship. Given demographic change on both sides of the Atlantic, the activities of LITE, as established by this legislation, will also include a focus on inclusive and intergenerational solutions to current challenges with the goal of empowering individuals across generations and from diverse backgrounds with the knowledge, tools, opportunity, and access to fully participate in their democracies. In addition, LITE will seek to reunify communities by assisting leaders with strategies that build resilience against the exploitation of community grievances that can lead to dangerous divisions in our societies.

In February, we hosted young parliamentarians from the OSCE region here in the U.S. Congress to discuss how we can strengthen their political inclusion to advance peace and security efforts. Last year, we held hearings featuring European lawmakers, and on global leadership, democracy and public diplomacy. These hearings were the capstone in a decade of events that began in 2009 whereby the

Commission has convened U.S. and European policymakers under the banner of the Transatlantic Minority Political Leadership Conference and Transatlantic Inclusion Leaders Network to support increased political representation in western democracies. As we celebrate the tenth anniversary of these efforts that have been pivotal in strengthening international relations over the past decade, I hope you will join me in supporting LITE to further codify leadership exchanges and knowledge building between diverse and young transatlantic policy makers as a means to sustain our democratic futures.

HONORING MICHAEL PAUL STEPHENSON, JR.

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Michael Paul Stephenson, Jr. Michael is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 1028, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Michael has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Michael has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community. Most notably, Michael has earned the rank of Firebuilder in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say. Michael has also contributed to his community through his Eagle Scout project. Michael constructed two garden boxes for the early childhood education programs at the Platte County Community Center in Platte City, Missouri.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Michael Paul Stephenson, Jr. for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

TRIBUTE TO ALEXIS SANCHEZ—28TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT WOMAN OF THE YEAR

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Mr. SCHIFF. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of Women's History Month. Each year, we pay special tribute to the contributions and sacrifices made by our nation's women. It is an honor to pay homage to outstanding women who are making a difference in my Congressional District. I would like to recognize a remarkable woman, Alexis Sanchez of the Los Feliz neighborhood of Los Angeles, California.

As a native Angeleno, Alexis Sanchez is a transgender woman and a fearless supporter of transgender rights in her community and across the country. Ms. Sanchez displays powerful personal initiative and leadership as an advocate for transgender rights empow-

ering those who may not realize they have a voice. Dedicated to public service, she devotes her time to community organizing, media advocacy, and volunteering to support the LGBTQ+ community.

Alexis serves on the board of directors of Still Bisexual, a non-profit that seeks to raise bi+ visibility and advocate for mental health resources for bi+ individuals. Ms. Sanchez is involved in planning the City of West Hollywood's Transgender Day of Remembrance and advocating for the creation of the first Transgender Day of Visibility in Los Angeles.

Ms. Sanchez is also a member of the City of West Hollywood Transgender Advisory Board, which is responsible for addressing issues concerning transgender rights, as well as making recommendations regarding the adoption of policies that would benefit the community. She has led the City of West Hollywood Transgender Advisory Board delegation that travels to Washington, D.C. to meet with Members of Congress and the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus to discuss the importance of the transgender rights movement in federal policy.

Alexis works within the field of public policy to implement change that benefits her community. She is an Assistant Program Manager at the Institute for Public Strategies, where she oversees a program centered on substance use disorders within the LGBTQ+ community. Alexis is currently collaborating with a coalition of state representatives to create a tool for law enforcement, researchers, community groups, and local municipalities to track methamphetamine data and research in the LGBTQ+ community.

Ms. Sanchez spends her free time as a volunteer and mentor with Brave Trails, a leadership camp for LGBTQ+ teenagers and is an enthusiastic hiker and mountaineer.

I ask all Members to join me in honoring this exceptional, well-respected woman of California's 28th Congressional District, Alexis Sanchez.

HENDRIX JETT RODRIQUEZ

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Hendrix Jett Rodriguez for receiving the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth award.

Hendrix Jett Rodriguez is a student at Everitt Middle School and received this award because his determination and hard work have allowed him to overcome adversities.

The dedication demonstrated by Hendrix Jett Rodriguez is exemplary of the type of achievement that can be attained with hard work and perseverance. It is essential students at all levels strive to make the most of their education and develop a work ethic which will guide them for the rest of their lives.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Hendrix Jett Rodriguez for winning the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassador for Youth award. I have no doubt he will exhibit the same dedication and character in all of his future accomplishments.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MAJOR GENERAL DAVID F. WHERLEY, JR., DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NATIONAL GUARD RETENTION AND COLLEGE ACCESS ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, today, I introduce the Major General David F. Wherley, Jr., District of Columbia National Guard Retention and College Access Act (NGRCA). This bill is named for General Wherley, former Commanding General of the D.C. National Guard, who, along with his wife, Ann, and seven others were tragically killed when Metro trains collided on the Red Line on June 22, 2009. This bill would permanently authorize funding for a program that provides grants for higher education to members of the D.C. National Guard, which is under the control of the federal, not the District of Columbia, government. I renamed this bill after General Wherley because he worked tirelessly with me to get funding for the program for many years, and because of his devotion to the youth of the District and to the National Guard.

The NGRCA authorizes an education incentive program, recommended by General Wherley and his successor, Major General Errol Schwartz, to stem the troublesome loss of D.C. Guard members to other units, including National Guards in surrounding states that offer such educational benefits to their Guards. I am grateful that Congress has consistently provided funds for the program at our request, most recently \$413,000 in fiscal year 2020. Permanently authorizing the program is necessary, however, to ensure that D.C. Guard members receive the same treatment and benefits as other National Guard members, particularly those in neighboring states that compete with the District for members and provide these education benefits. Today, the Guard for the nation's capital has a diminished ability to compete for regional residents if membership in the Maryland or Virginia Guards is more economically beneficial. A competitive tuition assistance program for the D.C. Guard would provide a significant and much-needed incentive to help maintain enrollment and level the field of competition. The federal government supports D.C. Guard functions and understands it should support this small benefit as well, because the appropriators have always funded the D.C. Guard program, even without authorization. However, depending on appropriations alone leaves the D.C. Guard program in a tenuous condition at odds with the tuition programs in nearby states. Because the program is not controversial, there is no reason not to permanently authorize funding for these D.C. National Guard education benefits.

I appreciate that the appropriators and ultimately Congress have not hesitated to fund the education benefits for the D.C. National Guard. This support argues strongly for permanent authorization. These small education benefits have not only encouraged high-quality recruits, but have helped the D.C. Guard to maintain the force necessary to protect the federal presence here, including the possibility of a natural disaster or terrorist attack. I am pleased to introduce this bill based on the ad-

vice of Guard personnel, who best know what is necessary.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

TRUTH ABOUT COMMUNISM

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I am grateful Dr. Derek W.H. Thomas of The First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, South Carolina, in the weekly First Things (Monday, March 1) newsletter published a tribute for Richard Wurmbrand of Bucharest, Romania. This tribute is a reminder to all Americans of the tragic true inhumanity of totalitarian communism enforced by Soviet Socialists.

THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS

THIS SATURDAY . . .

THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS

This Saturday, February 29 (it is a leap year), is the anniversary of the arrest and imprisonment of Richard Wurmbrand in 1948. Born in Bucharest, Romania, in 1909, Richard was sent to Moscow as an adolescent to study Marxism. He was pursued by the Soviet secret police, and upon his return to Romania, he became a Comintern for the communist regime. At the outbreak of the second World War, he was converted to Christianity and was later ordained, first as an Anglican and then, as the war was almost over and his country occupied by the Soviet Union, a Lutheran. In 1944, he began a ministry to his Romanian countrymen and to Red Army soldiers. As the Soviet regime began to control churches, Wurmbrand began an "underground" ministry to his people. Within a few years, he denounced communism as incompatible with Christianity. He was arrested on February 29, 1948, while on his way to church.

Richard Wurmbrand passed through several penal facilities and would spend three years in solitary confinement, twelve feet below ground without light or sound (the guards put felt under their shoes). He later recounted that he maintained his sanity by sleeping by day and staying awake at night preaching out loud a sermon to himself.

Wurmbrand was released from prison in 1956 after eight and half years. Warned not to preach again, he continued to serve the underground churches and was arrested again in 1959 and sentenced to 25 years. During this second imprisonment, he was beaten and tortured, including mutilation, burning, and being locked in a freezer icebox. Later, he recounted how his feet were beaten until the flesh was exposed, and then the next day beaten until the bones were exposed.

In 1964, Norwegians paid the Communist regime \$10,000 for his release, and Wurmbrand and his wife would eventually emigrate to the United States. He died in 2001 in California.

During his time in the United States he authored almost 20 books and founded The Voice of the Martyrs, an organization that draws attention to the persecuted church worldwide.

Here is one of Wurmbrand's famous quotes: "I have seen Christians in Communist prisons with fifty pounds of chains on their feet, tortured with red-hot iron pokers, in whose throats spoonfuls of salt had been forced, being kept afterward without water, starving, whipped, suffering from cold—and praying with fervor for the Communists. This is

humanly inexplicable! It is the love of Christ, which was poured out in our hearts."

—Derek W.H. Thomas, Senior Minister.

HOPE RULE

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Hope Rule for receiving the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth award.

Hope Rule is a student at Arvada West High School and received this award because her determination and hard work have allowed her to overcome adversities.

The dedication demonstrated by Hope Rule is exemplary of the type of achievement that can be attained with hard work and perseverance. It is essential students at all levels strive to make the most of their education and develop a work ethic which will guide them for the rest of their lives.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Hope Rule for winning the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassador for Youth award. I have no doubt she will exhibit the same dedication and character in all of her future accomplishments.

IN RECOGNITION OF JUDGE FRED A. PIERANTONI III, RECIPIENT OF THE GREATER PITTSTON FRIENDLY SONS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

HON. MATT CARTWRIGHT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Judge Fred A. Pierantoni III, who will receive the Achievement Award from the Greater Pittston Friendly Sons of St. Patrick. He will be honored at the group's 106th annual gathering on Tuesday, March 17, 2020.

Judge Pierantoni is a lifelong resident of the Greater Pittston Area. He is a 1976 graduate of Pittston Area High School and a cum laude graduate of Wilkes University with a Bachelor of Science in political science. In 1983, Judge Pierantoni received his Juris Doctorate from Temple University's School of Law in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Following law school, Judge Pierantoni was assistant district attorney in Luzerne County from 1983 to 1988. In 1992, Judge Pierantoni was elected as magisterial judge for District 11-1-5 and has spent 20 years on the bench serving the people of the Greater Pittston Area.

Judge Pierantoni was elected to the Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas and began his tenure on January 4, 2012. Since taking the bench, he has been assigned cases in criminal court including homicide, civil trials, and family court. Judge Pierantoni presently serves as administrative judge for the Luzerne County Juvenile Court Division and serves as supervising judge for the Luzerne County Grand Jury. He is also a zone delegate for the