

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

HON. JOHN LEWIS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 28, 2020

Mr. LEWIS. Madam Speaker, I rise in honor of National Foster Care Month.

For more than thirty years, the month of May has given voice to the unique, often complicated needs and situations of young people in our nation's foster care system. Sadly, too many of our young people are at risk of being left out and left behind. The pandemic only exacerbated the neglect and abuse of young people of all races, ages, and backgrounds in Georgia and across our country.

For these reasons, it is important that, during National Foster Care Month, we recognize the nearly half million children who are currently in our nation's child welfare system. Madam Speaker, they must know that, despite all that is happening in our nation and around the world, I along with many other Members of Congress, mentors, volunteers, friends, and extended families love and value each and every young person in foster care.

We must recommit to doing all we can to maximize their capacity and reaffirm our belief in their hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Foster youth must trust and know that, on the darkest of days, we are always in their corner, and they are always in our hearts and thoughts.

We must each do our part to ensure that every young person and aspiring adoptive and foster parent is able to fulfill their dreams of a stable, loving family. Many adults want to open their homes and their hearts, but they face barriers because the system says that they practice the wrong religion, love the wrong person, or are not married. Many children enter the system because of similar discrimination, and some experience it while in public care.

For these reasons, I am proud to sponsor the bipartisan Every Child Deserves a Family Act to end discrimination in our child welfare system and expand every opportunity for a safe, forever family. I will continue working with my colleagues to pass this critical legislation and provide much-needed protections for children and adults in the child welfare system.

Inspired by the experiences of many former foster youth in Metro Atlanta, I am deeply concerned about the more than 20,000 youth who age out of the foster care system every year. Government authorities share a unique and distinct responsibility to support those youth who transition from foster care to independent living. Far too often, these young adults go on to receive less education, hold fewer jobs, experience more homelessness and housing instability, and often experience imprisonment at higher rates than their peers who did not experience foster care.

Federal, state, and local government have a moral duty to do all we can to protect and as-

sist young people during and after their transition from foster care. The current coronavirus pandemic exposed the difficulties that many of foster youth face in navigating adolescence and adulthood with limited support. Government programs and authorities are often their only available resource, and we must do all we can to help restore hope and opportunities to young people and address the real, critical disparities they face prior to, during, and beyond this pandemic. I plan to introduce a comprehensive legislative package soon to do just that.

During this National Foster Care Month, may we all be rededicated to the task of lifting up the young people entrusted to our nation's care while preparing and enabling them to succeed.

HONORING THE LIFE OF ARMY SPC. JUAN MIGUEL MENDEZ COVARRUBIAS

HON. TJ COX

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 28, 2020

Mr. COX of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of Army Specialist Juan Miguel Mendez Covarrubias of Hanford, California, who gave his life in service to his country on March 11, 2020. While deployed in support of Operation Inherent Resolve at Camp Taji, Iraq, his unit was engaged by enemy indirect fire and he lost his life. He was 27 years old.

A Central Valley native, Juan Miguel was a beloved son, brother, and husband. In 2018 he married his longtime girlfriend Bianca Meza and that same year he enlisted in the United States Army as a Signal Support System Specialist. Juan Miguel was assigned to 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Juan Miguel aspired to make the world a better place and always pushed himself to lead by example. He is remembered fondly as someone with a big heart and who always put the needs of others before his own. Our nation has lost a great warrior. He is a true American Hero and his memory will live on in the hearts of those who love him.

Juan Miguel's awards and decorations include the Global War on Terrorism Medal, National Defense Service Ribbon, and the Army Service Ribbon. I ask my colleagues to join me in a moment of remembrance for Army Specialist Juan Miguel Mendez Covarrubias, and for all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

Juan Miguel is survived by his wife Bianca, his mother Monica Mendez, his father Alfredo Covarrubias and his younger brother and sisters.

HONORING THE LIFE OF MICHAEL MORALES (LTC USAF RET.)

HON. JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 28, 2020

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Madam Speaker, I would like to honor the life and service of my friend, Michael Morales LTC from Naranjito, Puerto Rico who passed away on May 8, 2020 at the young age of forty-two.

Michael was proud to serve his country. He joined the United States Air Force, serving in distinguished roles such as the principal manager for multinational military exercises covering 32 nations across Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, also as instructor and evaluator pilot for the C-7 and C-130, as Commander of the 538th Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron, and as a Legislative Liaison for the Secretary of Defense on acquisitions and sustainment on programs for the new Air Force One and KC-46 air tanker programs.

He also served as a Senior Advisor to former Small Business Administrator Linda McMahon and was responsible for bringing the Secretary to the Island for HUBZone events geared towards fueling small business growth in historically underutilized business zones. As a Senior Advisor to the Administrator, he also led the agency's policy efforts in Puerto Rico; working closely with federal and local government, banking sector, and entrepreneurs to develop policy aimed at fostering entrepreneurial repatriation, economic growth, and assist with the Island's economic status.

Michael lived a life of public service. President Woodrow Wilson once said that "You are not here merely to make a living. You are here to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, and with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world. . . ." Michael was the best of us, an example to us all.

Thank you, Michael. *Rest in Peace.* Descansa en Paz.

OBSERVING THE 102ND ANNIVERSARY OF AZERBAIJAN'S REPUBLIC

HON. STEVE CHABOT

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 28, 2020

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, as Co-Chair of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, I rise today to recognize Azerbaijan on the occasion of its 102nd Republic Day. Azerbaijan is a critical partner of the United States in the region and maintains a proud heritage as an independent country.

Upon declaring independence in 1918, Azerbaijan earned the unique distinction of

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