

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNITION OF MELISSA AND DAVID COMRAS AS A 2020 ANGELS IN ADOPTION HONOREE

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 21, 2020

Mr. HASTINGS. Madam Speaker, it is my great privilege to rise today to honor Melissa and David Comras, for their extraordinary contributions to the lives of children and teenagers in the foster care system.

Melissa and David were recognized as a 2020 Angels in Adoption by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI). The Comras family has a strong history of involvement with both adoption and foster care. Melissa began her career helping children as a Guardian Ad Litem 20 years ago, when she began working with teenagers aging out of the foster care system. She is a fierce advocate for the rights of teens and guides them through the process of the independent living program through their 18th birthday and beyond. By opening their home and, most importantly, their hearts, through their personal experience with fostering and adopting their daughter Amelia, and by fighting for children who are at their most vulnerable as they age out of the foster system. Melissa and David truly exemplify Angels in Adoption.

Founded in 2001, CCAI is a nonprofit organization with the vision that every child should know the love and support of a caring family. Every year, CCAI selects a small group of outstanding individuals, families, or organizations across the nation to be recognized as Angels in Adoption. These honorees have gone above and beyond to demonstrate their commitment to improving the lives of children in need of permanent, loving homes.

Madam Speaker, I am so very proud of Melissa and David Comras for all the work that they have done in our community. I wish them the best as they continue their work to make the dream of a forever family a reality for so many children in need.

OUTLYING AREA APPRENTICESHIP EXPANSION ACT

HON. GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN

OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 21, 2020

Mr. SABLAN. Madam Speaker, today, I am introducing the Outlying Areas Apprenticeship Expansion Program, so the benefits of the National Apprenticeship Act are available to the people of the Northern Mariana Islands as in the rest of the United States.

The National Apprenticeship Act has proven its value over the last 83 years, helping grow local economies and ushering young people into successful careers. Yet the Act does not

support apprenticeships in the Marianas and other insular areas. My bill fixes that inequity, providing the annual funding necessary to support the creation of, and expansion of registered apprenticeship programs in the Marianas, and the rest of the smaller insular areas.

Apprenticeship programs foster opportunity and innovation in fields affecting the well-being of people across the Nation, and help communities prepare for the future by developing workforces in crucial fields, like telecommunications and healthcare.

I have every reason to believe that apprenticeship programs will similarly lift up the hard-working people of the Marianas, and other insular areas.

I urge all my colleagues to support this important legislation.

JACK SCHURMAN—VETERANS LEADER

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 21, 2020

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to remember a great friend of mine and a tremendous advocate for America's veterans, Mr. Jack Edward Schurman. A little more than two years ago, I spoke about Jack as he moved from his longtime residence of Shelbyville, IL, in my 15th Congressional District, to the Mississippi State Veterans Home to be near his daughter, Kelli Ann, in Bay St. Louis, MS. On September 13, Jack passed way, a victim of the ongoing, tragic COVID-19 pandemic.

Born in Iowa on June 12, 1939, Jack joined the U.S. Navy in 1959. He rose to the rank of yeoman third class before a disability cut short his service in 1964. Jack made his way to Illinois. In 1976, he married Nancy Ellen Cranford. They raised two daughters, Kelli Ann and Kim Marie.

As chairman of my Veterans Advisory Committee, Jack used his valuable experience and perspective as a disabled veteran in leading our meetings through the years. Between meetings, he would direct a number of veterans to my office for casework assistance, several of whom he had to use his well-known persistence to convince they could trust a government representative.

Jack's health declined after the death of his beloved Nancy in 2016, leading to his move to Mississippi. But even after leaving the state, he continued advocating for his fellow veterans in Illinois, staying in contact with my office from long distance.

Madam Speaker, Jack Edward Schurman was laid to rest next to Nancy at Mt. Zion Cemetery near Shelbyville. After fighting the good fight, may he rest in peace.

HONORING THE LIFE OF BISHOP HEZEKIAH ROSS

HON. STEPHANIE N. MURPHY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 21, 2020

Mrs. MURPHY of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor my constituent, Bishop Hezekiah Ross, who passed away on July 29, 2020, at the age of 91.

Dr. Ross was a man of faith and a man of action. His life was defined by service to others. Dr. Ross served in the Army, deploying to Korea in 1950.

After returning home to Central Florida, he became assistant pastor and then senior pastor at the West Sanford Freewill Holiness Church, serving there for over six decades.

When I took office, I asked Dr. Ross—and he generously agreed—to serve on my faith leaders' advisory board. Despite his advanced age, he never missed a session. In his quiet, dignified way, he helped me better understand, and address, the needs of the Sanford community.

Throughout his life, Dr. Ross ministered to his congregation, but he also led a street ministry and a prison ministry, counseling and mentoring men and women on the margins of society, those forgotten or forsaken by others.

He was the epitome of grace and compassion in a world that needs more of both.

Dr. Ross was also a trailblazer. In 1969, he became the first black firefighter in the city of Sanford. For 22 years, he was firefighter and a pastor, a rare and wonderful combination, saving lives while saving souls.

Of course, it could not have been easy to integrate this institution. But Hezekiah Ross was never interested in doing easy things. He was a determined man. He wanted to serve his community, and he wouldn't be deterred or discouraged.

At that time, in that place, the idea of a black firefighter could be hard to fathom—and Hezekiah faced his share of prejudice. But, over time, Hezekiah came to be accepted, admired, and—ultimately—beloved by his fellow firefighters.

A few asked him to forgive them for the way they had initially treated him, which of course he did.

Being a firefighter under any circumstances takes courage. Being a firefighter under these conditions takes courage and character, and Dr. Ross possessed both.

In 2004, more than a decade after he had retired from the force, Dr. Ross was invited to become the Sanford Fire Department's first chaplain, ministering to firefighters and their families.

The man who was once tolerated was now treasured.

Bishop Ross is survived by his wife Lelia, who was kind enough to speak to my office about her late husband. "We were married for 68 years," she told us. "We did everything together."

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