

president. Upon his graduation, Tom attended the University of Oregon on a football scholarship, where he was again elected student body president. He graduated in 1967 with a degree in political science and went on to receive a master's in education in 1973. He worked as an events manager at his alma mater until he accepted a full-time position as director of events for the NCAA.

Tom spent the next 38 years working for the NCAA, as a leader and passionate administrator. According to his colleagues and those who worked closely with Tom, he was known to make time for everyone. He was thoughtful, respectable, likeable, honest and a silent power. He is credited with turning the college basketball championship into what it is today, a massive event with fans all around the world and a multi-billion dollar television contract.

The City of Indianapolis benefited greatly from having a leader like Tom in the sports world. He was influential in moving the NCAA headquarters from Kansas City, Missouri to the City of Indianapolis in 1999. Tom not only assisted in making March Madness what it is, he was key in helping the City of Indianapolis host the Final Four. Indianapolis has hosted seven NCAA Men's Basketball Final Fours and three NCAA Women's Final Fours in its history and is scheduled to host the 2021 and 2026 men's finals as well. Tom was very friendly to the City of Indianapolis in many ways, generating events, promoting the city and, according to his friends, there was never a young person who was interested in a career in sports that Tom would not take under his wing.

Tom received numerous awards throughout his lifetime including being inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in 2017. He received the John W. Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award in 2001 for his outstanding lifetime dedication to basketball, and the University of Oregon honored him with the Distinguished Alumnus Award. The National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame enshrined Tom as a contributor to the game, and in 2017, he was awarded Indiana's highest civilian honor, the Sagamore of the Wabash. Posthumously, Tom was inducted into the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame this year.

Though it is obvious Tom had a huge impact on the world of sports, it is said that his greatest joys were in his personal life. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, cousin and true friend. In speaking with Tom's friends, there is one consistent theme that they all mention. Tom was a wonderful friend who would stop at nothing to help those he cared about. He loved playing golf and watching all sporting events with his family and friends. Though he loved all sports, he remained a loyal fan of his Oregon Ducks, rarely missing an event involving his university. Based on this long-term commitment, the University of Oregon has established the Tom Jernstedt Student Athlete Scholarship.

I am honored to stand today and memorialize Tom. He was a man of character and class, constantly putting the wants and needs of others before his own. I join his family and many friends as well as countless student-athletes in mourning the loss of Tom Jernstedt.

CELEBRATING THE RETIREMENT
OF VICTOR BIRD

HON. TOM COLE

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Mr. COLE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mr. Victor Bird on his retirement after a remarkable 36-year career in public service to the state of Oklahoma.

Graduating with a bachelor's degree and juris doctorate from the University of Tulsa, Victor is a lifelong Oklahoman. After graduating, he started his career in law with the public sector. Victor's career in public service started in 1983 in the Oklahoma Attorney General's office. From there he served at Oklahoma State University, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and again the Attorney General's office under two different attorney generals. It was through this impressive path that led him to the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission as the Director in 2002. With no previous aviation experience, Victor recognized the importance of the aviation industry for Oklahoma and immediately put his knowledge of the state to work.

After 18 years at the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission, few have left such a legacy. As the longest serving director in the state's history, his advocacy and implementations have left a distinctive mark on Oklahoma's role in aviation and aerospace. Under his leadership, the Commission has invested \$71 million in state funds and directed \$189 million in federal funds into airport infrastructure statewide. Victor's pro aviation mindset has led to the growth of the annual economic impact to \$44 billion, which has directly resulted in tens of thousands of jobs. Victor Bird played a key role in shaping aviation to become one of the state's largest industries and top employers.

Victor's career has largely gone unnoticed. He is the first and only Oklahoman to serve as chairman of the National Association of State Aviation Officials in its 90-year history. He is also the first and only non-elected public official to receive the Joseph B. "Doc" Hartranft Jr. Award from the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association. In 2006, he received the Distinguished Service Award from the Oklahoma Association for Career and Technical Education for his contributions to career and technology education in Oklahoma. In 2009, Bird was the recipient of the prestigious General Thomas P. Stafford Award, which recognizes those who have made substantial contributions to the Oklahoma aerospace industry and who reflect the revolutionary spirit of Gen. Stafford. Additionally, in 2017, Bird received the Kenneth A. Rowe Ambassador of Aviation Award from NASAO in honor of his national accomplishments. Most recently, in 2020, Victor received the President's Award from the Oklahoma Airport Operators Association for his significant work in Oklahoma aviation.

For four decades, Victor Bird's dedication to Oklahoma has continued to help our state make enormous strides in terms of economic growth and innovation. As we reflect on the 36-year career of Victor Bird, let us look at his tireless work to inspire us.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in congratulating Mr. Victor Bird on an extraordinary career and wish him all the best in his much-deserved retirement.

HONORING THE LEGACY OF MS.
JEAN D. THOMPSON

HON. CEDRIC L. RICHMOND

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Mr. RICHMOND. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor the legacy and work of Louisiana Freedom Rider, Ms. Jean D. Thompson. Ms. Thompson made history by participating in the Freedom Rides that helped illuminate persistence segregation in the South despite Morgan v. Virginia and Boynton v. Virginia.

Born in Lake Providence, Louisiana on January 13, 1942, Ms. Thompson was an active member of the NAACP and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Throughout her life, Ms. Thompson participated in a number of sit-ins, was active in Louisiana and Mississippi Freedom Summers, and contributed to anti-war and feminist efforts in San Francisco and Berkeley, California. Starting at the age of 19, her passion and determination made her one of the youngest trailblazers for racial equity.

In response to the federal government's unwillingness to enforce the U.S. Supreme Court's decisions outlawing segregated interstate travel, the Freedom Riders rode integrated buses across state lines in the South to bring awareness to local laws that still required blacks and whites to use separate seating. These intentional actions played a key role in the Civil Rights Movement.

Ms. Thompson is a daughter of New Orleans, and without her desegregation efforts, persistence against injustice, and fearlessness, many of us would not be where we are today. It is critically important that we give Ms. Thompson her flowers while she is still here with us so we can celebrate the strides she took to improve racial equality. May we always lift up her name and honor her legacy by continuing to advance equal rights and justice for African Americans and those of African descent all around the world.

Madam Speaker, I celebrate the life and work of Ms. Jean D. Thompson.

CONGRATULATING THE VIENNA
EAGLES SOFTBALL TEAM FOR
WINNING THE 2020 MISSOURI
CLASS I STATE SOFTBALL
CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. BLAINE LUETKEMEYER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Vienna Eagles softball team for winning the 2020 Missouri Class I State Softball Championship.

This is Vienna High School's third state championship win in the history of their softball program. They should be commended for their hard work and dedication throughout this past year.

Madam Speaker, I ask you to join me in congratulating the Vienna Eagles for a job well done.