

food on their table and a roof over their head and be able to pay their other expenses with their earnings. Many of these minimum wage workers are essential workers, helping our communities endure this pandemic.

Raising the minimum wage to fifteen dollars an hour isn't a cure-all. In high cost urban areas, such as the one I represent in the Bay Area, fifteen dollars an hour still is not enough to get ahead. But raising the federal minimum wage has been shown to help lift wages across the board for people at the lower end of the income scale.

A fifteen dollar minimum wage would give 27 million low-wage workers a raise and lift nearly one MILLION people out of poverty. But this isn't just an economic need—it's a racial justice imperative. Many people of color have been paid poverty wages for too long—deepening the long standing racial and economic divisions in this country. African Americans, Hispanics and Asian Americans are all much more likely to make only the minimum wage.

Recent polling shows that 72 percent of Americans, a vast majority, support raising the minimum wage, including Republicans and Independents. We need to ensure workers get paid living wages, especially in times of crisis. Raising the minimum wage is a necessary first step to growing our economy and recovering from this pandemic. Additionally, it will also lessen the need for full time workers to be receiving public assistance. When you raise the wages of the lowest-paid workers, it is good for our communities and our country. Those workers can then spend money in their communities, boosting local small businesses and our entire economy.

HONORING HOMETOWN HEROES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. CAMMACK) for 30 minutes.

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate and honor hometown heroes in my district and across the Nation, these proud Americans embodying the persistent, giving, and fighting spirit of our national creed.

The COVID pandemic has put our country and our communities to the test, pushing us to seek positivity and hope in each day as we have weathered the storms that have come our way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight the great work and service of my constituents who have shown bravery and empathy in these trying times.

Last week, I invited the constituents of Florida's Third Congressional District, the Gator Nation, to submit their nominations for individuals they would like to honor for their dedication to our communities over the last year. I received several nominations with the names of constituents who have gone above and beyond the call of duty, who put service above self, so many nominations, in fact, that we have pledged to continue this series throughout the year to highlight their great work.

Included in this group are first responders, law enforcement officers, teachers, nurses, and Good Samaritans. They are the backbone of our commu-

nities. I am honored to be able to represent them in Congress and share their stories with you today.

The first is my friend, and the only woman sheriff in the great State of Florida, Sheriff Michelle Cook. Sheriff Cook, in her long tenure in law enforcement, has walked the beat and fought against the scourge of the opioid epidemic and human trafficking in Clay County.

She is also the proud mother to four foster children, who she lovingly brought into her own home to prevent their separation. She works every day to protect our community and our great county of Clay County. I am so grateful for her service.

Thank you, Sheriff Cook.

Now, much like Sheriff Cook, Sergeant Kim Miller put service above self as a member of the Green Cove Springs Police Department. While Sergeant Miller celebrated her retirement earlier this year, she has spent the last 15 years of her life dedicated to the children of Clay County and their safety and development.

She is proud to have been the first Black female sergeant for the Green Cove Springs Police Department and continues to make the citizens of Clay County proud.

It was always a pleasure seeing Sergeant Miller's smiling face when I visited the department, and I congratulate her on her retirement this year. Although she is not on the force any longer, her service to the Green Cove Springs community is remarkable. I am honored to celebrate her here today.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. CARL).

Mr. CARL. Mr. Speaker, what an honor to get to speak before you. This is a thrill.

I rise today to honor several hometown heroes from my district who have made an impact on the community over the course of the year.

First, I would like to thank my colleague from Florida, Congresswoman KAT CAMMACK, for organizing this Special Order hour.

I also reached out to my community, and I asked for the leaders in our community to give us some of what they think to be hometown heroes. Let me just run through a few real quick.

Last year has been tough on millions of Americans across the country as we battle the COVID pandemic and endure countless hardships, but I am proud of so many folks in south Alabama who have made our community a better place. Many of them are unsung heroes. I would like to take a moment today to honor a few of them.

Brian Copes, manufacturing instructor for the city of Chickasaw School System, is a leader in the effort of developing inexpensive prosthetic limbs that will change many lives of amputees throughout Latin America.

Students from all disciplines have been working together to create a real nonprofit business. Eventually, these

students will travel to Latin America, not only to fit the amputees but also to aid the amputees in rehabilitation as they learn to walk and use their new limbs.

Another one is Natalie Fox, assistant administrator and chief nursing officer for USA Physicians Group. That "USA" stands for University of South Alabama, which we are very proud of. And USA Healthcare has been a leading coordinator in the University of South Alabama Healthcare System community testing and vaccination sites for the Mobile region.

To date, she has overseen the successful implementation of over 26,000 COVID-19 vaccines administered since December 15, and over 50,000 coronavirus tests performed since the pandemic began. Natalie has worked tirelessly to meet the high demands on the healthcare system for the past year, and I am incredibly thankful for her hard work and her dedication to the people of south Alabama.

Jennifer Myrick of Fairhope, Alabama, has been a critical figure in the recovery efforts after Hurricanes Sally and Zeta, which hit the area. Jennifer worked through the Fairhope United Methodist Church to set up an independent point of distribution to hand out critical supplies to the public.

She has also headed up a feeding program for those supplies and is an active member of the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster through Baldwin County Emergency Management, where she helped fulfill many needs throughout the county.

Jennifer also worked with the Fairhope Police Department to keep police officers, dispatchers, and correction officers fed through this long stretch between both of these hurricanes.

Kathy Couey, a recreation supervisor for the city of Chickasaw, Alabama, goes above and beyond her duties every day in her day-to-day responsibilities to make sure the city is a better and healthier place for families to live. Her creativity is limitless, with a true servant's heart.

With so many people working and learning from home over the past year, staying active and getting outdoors has been critical to people's physical and mental health. Kathy's hard work has made Chickasaw a better place to live and raise a family.

Virtually no person across the country has not been impacted in some way by the pandemic, natural disasters, and the countless other challenges that we have faced. We have come a long way. Although we are living in difficult times, I could not be prouder than I am to be an American today.

And I couldn't be more thankful for so many incredible people all over my district and all over the Nation who have worked hard each day, not for fame, not for recognition or for money, but for the betterment of their friends and neighbors. This is what makes America strong.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to take a moment today to recognize just a few of those unsung heroes who have made an impact in our community over the past year.

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Alabama. Even though, the SEC Nation, we may be rivals on game day, when it comes to honoring our hometown heroes, we are united, and I appreciate you taking the time to share these stories.

Mr. Speaker, before I yield to another one of my great colleagues, I want to highlight a great man, Mr. Mike Leader, from Fleming Island, Florida, who is an active duty physician proudly serving in the United States Navy.

Mike was deployed in April 2020 to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, and he has been working tirelessly to save lives over the last year. His wife, Adriane, and his three children have remained strong and positive during his time away from home, recognizing his sacrifice for our fellow Americans.

Mike is set to be deployed again next month to once again take up the fight against this pandemic, and he and his family will be in my thoughts and prayers as he continues the fight to end COVID-19.

I would also like to honor Orange Park native Peggie French. Ms. French is what her nominators call an angel to seniors. Ms. French spends hours every single week scheduling vaccines for seniors in Clay County. She has become somewhat of an expert in the process and even helps to monitor the vaccine sites for cancellations to help seniors trying to get appointments.

To date, she has helped over 60 senior citizens to get appointments for the COVID-19 vaccine in her spare time. I visited the COVID vaccination sites in my district a few weeks ago, where these very seniors that she helped were being vaccinated. I want to thank Peggie and those just like her for helping folks in our area.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Oklahoma (Mrs. BICE).

Mrs. BICE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank Representative CAMMACK for bringing this idea of honoring our hometown heroes to the floor. It is long overdue.

There are so many who have made an impact in our communities over the last year. When I think of the countless hours our healthcare workers have dedicated, their time spent away from family to take care of others, the doctors, nurses, and first responders, we can never fully thank them for their dedication to our country during this difficult time.

But as my team and I discussed who from Oklahoma's Fifth District has helped this community survive the pandemic, who worked on the ground with people in need, one name was mentioned over and over, and that was Pastor Derrick Scobey of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Oklahoma City.

He and his band of volunteers have worked countless hours to make sure

Oklahomans everywhere were fed, not just in the surrounding community but in towns and cities across the great State of Oklahoma. In partnership with the World Vision Organization, Pastor Scobey distributed more than 91,000 boxes of fresh food in the past year. That is 2.3 million pounds of food hand-delivered by Ebenezer Baptist Church and his countless volunteers throughout the State.

□ 2030

My team and I had the pleasure of assisting Pastor Scobey with a few of his distribution events in Oklahoma City. I was overwhelmed with the gratitude on the faces of those who were receiving these food boxes.

This man right here is truly making a difference to those in need. He has been on the ground day in and day out making sure that more than 150,000 Oklahomans did not go hungry during this pandemic.

In addition to food, he made sure that those needing furnishings did not go without. His group distributed 2,300 pallets of furniture to the underserved as well. It is a monumental task that Pastor Scobey took on, but he saw the need in his community. He heard from pastors and communities from across the State with similar needs, rolled up his sleeves, and he got to work.

This Nation needs more pastors like Derrick Scobey, who aren't afraid of the hard work of feeding our communities not just with the word of God on Sunday morning, but with hours of heavy lifting, sweating in the heat of the summer, or trying to stay warm in the subzero temperatures, all to make sure those who were hungry have something to eat.

So, Mr. Speaker, I thank Pastor Scobey for being a hero to Oklahomans from every corner of the great State of Oklahoma.

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from the great State of Oklahoma. It has been an honor so far serving with her in this Congress, and I expect that we will be hearing many more stories of great Oklahomans who are doing incredible work in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to honor a gentleman who is much like my husband, a hero and a firefighter. Justin Dean serves the Orange Park Fire Department and its city both in his capacity as a firefighter and as a heroic private citizen. Mr. Dean was driving home one afternoon recently when he noticed a car parked on the side of the bridge near Doctor's Lake. He pulled his vehicle over, proceeded to talk to the woman standing at the top of the bridge, and he offered her a hug. When she accepted, Firefighter Dean jumped into action and pulled her tightly over the rail to safety. He was awarded a meritorious award for his brave, lifesaving action.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Justin.

Mr. Speaker, Rhonda Wilson is a hero from my hometown of Gainesville,

Florida. She wears many hats in our community. She is a middle school teacher, a thespian, a theater director, and a philanthropist. She founded the Star Center Theatre nearly two decades ago and, in the years since, has provided an opportunity for local children and families to perform and enjoy fine arts.

A portion of all the theatre's proceeds go to Created Gainesville, a non-profit committed to reaching and restoring women caught in sex trafficking and sexual exploitation in Gainesville. Rhonda's work is especially impactful to me, as I have worked to eliminate human trafficking from our District and our State.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DONALDS).

Mr. DONALDS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Florida, my good friend, Congresswoman CAMMACK, for bringing this great idea to the House Chamber to honor those of us in our communities who have done, frankly, more than Members of Congress actually have. The sacrifices that they have made not only in our communities but throughout their lives is really something to honor, it is something to behold, and it is something to cherish. I am just grateful for this opportunity to do this on the people's floor this evening.

The first hometown hero I wish to honor is Captain Wayne Ogden Smith. Today, we pay tribute to one of Naples' hometown heroes. Mr. SMITH was a United States Air Force fighter pilot and a Vietnam prisoner of war. Captain Smith was a prisoner of war at the Hanoi Hilton for 5 years, alongside Senator Sam Johnson and Senator John McCain. However, he would never call himself a hometown hero.

Wayne was a 1965 graduate of the United States Air Force Academy and would fly 90 F-4 fighter combat missions over North Vietnam and Laos. Captain Smith was shot down on January 18, 1968, at the age of 24. He survived 5 years and 2 months and was repatriated on March 15, 1973.

Wayne's combat honors include two Silver Stars, the Legion of Merit, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Bronze "V" Stars, seven Air Medals, and the Purple Heart.

Now retired from the business world, Wayne Smith spends his time with his wife helping veterans and active military around the country through organizations like Wreaths Across America and Naples Spirit of '45, a celebration honoring our World War II veterans and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, another hometown hero from my District is Allison Dawson. Allison has proudly dedicated her life to educating our youth. Allison's career in youth education spans over 30 years, almost 20 of those in Lee County, Florida.

A single mom who raised three kids, she struggled to pay bills and struggled to put food on the table. Despite these obstacles, Allison remained committed

to her passion and her life's work: teaching and helping low-income students learn and grow to succeed.

During COVID-19, like thousands of teachers across our Nation, she juggled virtual school and in-person instruction flawlessly, all to ensure her students received the very best education. She is a prime example of how hard all teachers across America work every single day.

I am honored to recognize Allison Dawson today as a teacher and as a public servant. I thank Allison for her 30 years of service; her commitment to serving others; and ensuring that every child, no matter their race, gender and socioeconomic background, has access to a world-class education.

Mr. Speaker, my last hometown hero is Major Jose Martinez, BSN, RN. Jose Martinez, BSN and RN, is the nursing director of adult and pediatric emergency department at North Naples Hospital in southwest Florida. He has been a nurse for 22 years, and 13 of them at NCH.

Major Jose Martinez has a 19-year military career. He has served 9 years with the Army National Guard and 10 years with the Air Force Reserve.

Major Martinez is currently a flight nurse instructor and clinical management flight commander in the 45th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. Major Martinez just returned from a 6-month deployment at duty station Travis Air Force Base in California. Major Martinez coordinated more than 50 Aeromedical Evacuation Westpac/Cross Country Aeromedical missions with more than 400 aeromedical evacuation crew, critical care crew, and neonatal critical care members serving more than 100 patients who represent our U.S. military and their families.

He has dedicated his life to serving others and has saved countless lives. I am honored to recognize Major Martinez today and his sacrifices for our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, there are many heroes in all of our communities. These are just three who happen to live in my congressional district, and it is my honor to honor them this evening.

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, as a fellow Floridian, I look forward to getting to know the gentleman's hometown heroes at some point in the near future. I thank the gentleman for joining me here on the floor of the people's House to honor the hometown heroes who make up the great State of Florida.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to recognize my friend and the great sheriff of Marion County, Sheriff Billy Woods. I have known Billy for nearly a decade, and in that time, I have seen his passion for helping people. I am proud to have worked with Sheriff Woods on combating human trafficking in the State of Florida, as well as taking on criminal drug traffickers and supporting the rights of lawful gun owners. I am also proud to

recognize his tireless efforts tonight to protect and serve our ever-growing community in Marion County. I know Billy to be a man of integrity, grit, and honesty. He is a tremendous defender of freedom and security, and I am proud to call him and his wife, Samantha, dear friends.

I am deeply grateful for all of the people who have spoken here today. Their work and their efforts to make my district and its many communities a better place to live and raise a family do not go unnoticed. They make me proud to be an American and the Representative from Florida's Third Congressional District. I chose to celebrate these hometown heroes today to honor their work and celebrate their passion for helping others. I challenge my constituents and all Americans to take stock of the everyday heroes all around us and thank them for what they do.

Whether it is working as a frontline healthcare worker in a local clinic, a law enforcement officer supporting children, librarians assisting students with virtual learning, or a delivery worker ensuring that we all get our critical packages on time, they are all—and there are so many more out there—extraordinary Americans who continue to put duty above all else.

I thank the nominees and the nominators of today's heroes. Again, I look forward to continuing this yearlong series of honoring our hometown heroes, and I look forward to hearing more of my colleagues' stories from their hometown heroes.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity here tonight to honor these heroes, and I yield back the balance of my time.

HOMETOWN HEROES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. SLOTKIN) for 30 minutes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Olivia Letts, who passed away on February 1 at the age of 93. Ms. Letts was a true trailblazer.

After being hired as the first Black schoolteacher in Lansing, she was a constant force for good in the community. It is my privilege to honor her with my remarks on the floor of the people's House.

Born on the south side of Chicago, Ms. Letts did not let anything get in the way of her own education. According to her grandsons, the only time she was ever late for school was because of a trolley accident.

At the rooming house that she and her family shared with other families, she would wake up as early as 4 a.m. to study in the bathroom because it was the only time she could find peace and quiet.

She maintained her devotion to learning during her time at the Chicago Teachers College and her three advanced degree programs at Michigan

State University. Nothing could keep Ms. Letts from the classroom, not even the racial discrimination of the day.

To be sure, breaking the color barrier in Lansing schools wasn't easy. The first time she applied to be a teacher, she was rejected with a letter that said the district "had never made a practice of hiring anyone of her race, but would keep her under consideration." Undeterred, Ms. Letts lobbied local leaders until she was asked to reapply. Ten years later, she was promoted to principal.

Ms. Letts' story wouldn't be complete without mention of her husband and lifelong love, Richard, who passed away in 1997. For nearly half a century, their union was an unstoppable force for good in Lansing—she as the consummate advocate and role model for students and he as the city's equal opportunity officer and human relations director for 44 years. They are the namesake of the Letts Community Center, where this photo was taken.

Ms. Letts was an eternal optimist. She liked books with happy endings, whether they were Nicholas Sparks novels or President Obama's memoirs.

She lived a full life, and her story had a happy ending, too. Just a few days before her passing, she parked herself in front of the television, thrilled to watch her fellow Alpha Kappa Alpha sister, KAMALA HARRIS, be inaugurated as Vice President.

She is survived by her daughter, Eileen; her two grandsons, Robert and Matthew; as well as the countless individuals she touched with her grace and humility.

Since her passing, the tributes to her life have been effusive:

"She was just delightful."

"She helped pave the way."

"She just did what was right."

And my personal favorite, "Her legacy lives on in the work that folks are doing here in the community."

What a fitting way to remember such a towering figure of the Lansing community. May she indeed live on in the work and in these words spoken into the permanent RECORD of the people's House.

□ 2045

HONORING THE LEGACY OF JAMES BIBBS

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor another legend in the Lansing community, Mr. James Bibbs.

Mr. Bibbs has had many words written about him over the years, and almost all of them mention his distinction as the longest-tenured track-and-field coach in Michigan State University history.

From 1968 to 1995, his students won 52 Big Ten titles, 26 All-American honors, three NCAA titles, and broke two world records.

But those who know Coach Bibbs will tell you that it has never been about the number of titles and his own career. What has distinguished him over the years was the size of his heart and the kindness he has shown over the course of his life.