

Development Program, which he completed in 1999.

Throughout his professional career, Mr. Taitano has worked tirelessly to improve financial practices and procedures at the organizations he has led. He held numerous financial management positions with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of the Navy (DON). He previously served as the Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency's Office of Budget and Finance, Chief Financial Officer of the FSA, and Chief Financial Officer of the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service. He has also served as the Comptroller of the DON Naval Sea Systems Command's Naval Ordinance Center and as a Special Advisor for Defense Reform within the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

In 2009, Mr. Taitano was appointed the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial Operations with the DON's Office of the Assistant Secretary (Financial Management & Comptroller). In this capacity he was responsible for overseeing the DON's \$170 billion operating budget and exercised financial oversight for the DON's 830,000 military and civilian personnel, including over 400 support contractors.

Mr. Taitano is the recipient of the 2009 Presidential Rank Award of Meritorious Service. He has also received two DON Meritorious Civilian Service Medals, multiple USDA Farm Service Agency Administrator Honor Awards, and the USDA CFO Summit Award for the Budget and Performance Management System.

On behalf of the people of Guam and a grateful nation, I commend Mr. Dennis Taitano for his many years of dedicated service to our country. I wish him the best in his retirement.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILDERNESS ACT

**HON. PATRICK MEEHAN**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 18, 2014*

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

President Johnson signed the Wilderness Act in 1964 to permanently protect some of America's most beautiful wild places. The Act has so far protected 757 wilderness areas, accounting for a total of 109 million acres.

The National Wilderness Preservation System—comprised of four federal agencies—was established to monitor and protect these untrammeled spaces. In Pennsylvania alone, the NWPS has designated more than 9,000 acres of wilderness, including the Allegheny Islands and the Hickory Creek wilderness areas. These protected lands are void of construction, roads and permanent structures. Wilderness lands are also void of any logging and mining activities.

The NWPS not only protects the resident wildlife and natural ecosystems, but it also supports outdoor recreation activities and jobs. Wilderness areas provide tremendous opportunities for hiking, camping and fishing. Yet we are just visitors to these lands.

Mr. Speaker, the Wilderness Act and the National Wilderness Preservation System have helped to protect our nation's last re-

maining unspoiled lands and waters for the past 50 years. I celebrate the Wilderness Act and look forward to the excellent work the NWPS will continue to do in the years to come.

IN RECOGNITION OF OAKLAND COUNTY COMMISSIONER MATTIE MCKINNEY HATCHETT FOR HER DECADES OF SERVICE TO THE PONTIAC COMMUNITY

**HON. GARY C. PETERS**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 18, 2014*

Mr. PETERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my dear friend, Oakland County Commissioner Mattie McKinney Hatchett, as she prepares to step down from the commission at the end of her term.

When her tenure ends in December, Commissioner Hatchett will have completed more than a decade of service to the people of Pontiac as their elected representative to the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and will end the most recent chapter in her more than five decades of public service to the City of Pontiac. In 1963, Commissioner Hatchett began serving her community as an employee and volunteer in the Pontiac Public School District. As an education professional, Commissioner Hatchett has been involved in Pontiac Public Schools for more than fifty years and currently serves as a Trustee on the Pontiac Board of Education. During her time in Pontiac Public Schools she has held a variety of positions from teacher to elementary school principal, and several high-ranking administrative roles.

Through Commissioner Hatchett's many public service endeavors in the Pontiac community, she has become a leader, mentor and passionate advocate for her constituents, friends, and neighbors. Her extensive work in the community includes service as the Chairperson of the Pontiac General Hospital Building Authority, an Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency Counselor for Youth Corp., Deputy Mayor of the City of Pontiac, and as a member of the Golden Opportunity Club. She has also been a member of many national organizations like the National Congress of Black Women and the National Baptist Congress.

In her most recent role as Oakland County Commissioner, Commissioner Hatchett has continued to be a staunch advocate for the Pontiac community. She has worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices of her constituents are heard and has been involved in finding solutions to the issues affecting them. She has been an active member of the National Association of Counties and, in 2011, was named the first African-American Woman to serve as President of the Michigan Association of Counties.

As an elected representative, I have been honored to serve the residents of Pontiac in my time as a Michigan State Senator and Member of Congress, and I have been so fortunate to have Commissioner Hatchett as a local leader with whom I have been able to work to address many issues affecting our constituents. Commissioner Hatchett's leadership has earned her countless awards and

recognition from local community organizations—she has been honored as the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. Woman of the Year, a 2014 Wonder Woman Award recipient and the 2013 IMAGE AWARD recipients from Northern Oakland County NAACP. In recognition of the profound impact Commissioner Hatchett has made on the Pontiac community, in 2008, First Lady Michelle Obama acknowledged her as the "Mother of Pontiac".

Mr. Speaker, the people of Pontiac have been so fortunate to have a passionate advocate and leader as their voice to Oakland County for the last twelve years. Commissioner Mattie McKinney Hatchett's commitment to public service and decades of engagement with Pontiac residents to find solutions for the issues affecting their city and Oakland County are an example of the important work done by our locally elected officials. I know Commissioner Hatchett's voice on the Oakland County Commission will be greatly missed by her peers and by her constituents and wish her well as she begins a new chapter in her service to the people of Pontiac.

CPB'S "AMERICAN GRADUATE: LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN"

**HON. EARL BLUMENAUER**

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 18, 2014*

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this Saturday marks the 3rd annual "American Graduate Day," a live, public broadcasting event highlighting those working to keep America's students on the path to graduation.

Our local public broadcasting station's reporting is only the beginning of the work they do.

The American Graduate initiative, made possible with seed money from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, is the perfect example of this.

The initiative is a long-term effort by our public broadcasters to shed light on America's dropout crisis. But these efforts don't stop in the newsroom.

It's followed by local stations joining forces with over 1,000 partners and at-risk schools in their communities to find ways of meeting the initiative's goal: A 90 percent high school graduation rate in the U.S. by the year 2020.

This effort couldn't be more critical.

Each year, nearly one million students fail to graduate on time. The U.S., which once had some of the highest graduation rates of any developed country, now ranks 22nd out of 27 developed countries. That means today's generation will not be prepared for the jobs of tomorrow.

The initiative has made an impact. A study by Johns Hopkins found that American Graduate has successfully built local capacity to end the dropout crisis.

As the founder and co-chair of the Public Broadcasting Caucus, it's an honor to highlight the success of this program and the broader issue it is meaningfully addressing.