

seen, all of the changes in every facet of public and private life, yet that commitment remains. Virlane and Roland's lifelong commitment to each other and their family truly embodies Iowa values. As they reflect on their 50th anniversary may their commitment grow even stronger, as they continue to love, cherish, and honor one another for many years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this great couple on their 50th year together and I wish them many more. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating them on this momentous occasion.

IN RECOGNITION OF DANNY
THOMAS

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 16, 2016

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Fire Chief Danny Thomas who is retiring after 34 years of public service within the town of Trophy Club. The town has benefited immeasurably from his unfaltering dedication, unfailing commitment, and unwavering devotion to the residents he served. Chief Thomas has served in several different capacities and played an integral role in the growth of the Trophy Club Fire Department.

Chief Thomas began his career in 1982 as a volunteer firefighter. In 1999 he was hired as a lieutenant and within one month rose to the rank of captain. In 2006 he was promoted to chief and has proudly served the Trophy Club community ever since. Along with his promotion to fire chief he became the emergency management coordinator and fire marshal for the town. Chief Thomas had a vision of growth and safety for this small community and has stayed true to that vision from the beginning.

When Chief Thomas began his career Trophy Club only had a volunteer fire department. Today, it is a full time department providing emergency medical and fire rescue services; boasting 16 full-time employees and four volunteers. Much of the significant expansion and the many improvements the fire station has seen can be attributed to Chief Thomas. He oversaw the construction of MUD 1 Fire Station in 2011 and implemented the Citizens Fire Academy and Citizens Emergency Response Team. Chief Thomas brought professional insight and wisdom to his team. His legacy will not be forgotten and his service will have a lasting impact within the department, as well as the Trophy Club community.

As Chief Thomas retires, he is highly esteemed by his colleagues and the community he has served for over 30 years. It is my privilege to honor such an outstanding citizen and to serve the town of Trophy Club in the U.S. House of Representatives.

RECOGNIZING THE HOLY AND
GREAT COUNCIL

HON. LEE M. ZELDIN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 16, 2016

Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church.

Christianity and Orthodox Christianity, in particular, have suffered greatly in recent years. This negative development is the result of the Islamic fanaticism perpetuated by the Islamic State and other terror groups using the war in Syria as an excuse to "ethnically cleanse" Orthodox Christians from their villages. One such horror was the international broadcast of Islamic State members simultaneously beheading twenty-one Egyptians because they would not convert to Islam when ordered to denounce their Coptic Orthodox Christian faith.

Several Orthodox Christian Churches from around the world will gather in what is called a Great and Holy Council for the first time in over 1,000 years. The focus of the Council will be internal activities of the various Orthodox Churches; the current crisis for Christians in the Middle East is also a danger for so many Orthodox Christians and should not go unobserved at this history meeting.

All Christians and all men and women of faith and peace should focus on this Great and Holy Council and the individual who convened the various hierarchs, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. He possibly more than any other Christian leader understands the Muslim world; during his life he has seen Muslim cruelty toward Christians, which has greatly diminished the number of Christians in the Republic of Turkey.

The Ecumenical Patriarch experienced the 1955 pogrom carried out against the large Greek Orthodox community in Turkey. The pogrom resulted in many unnecessary Greek deaths and the destruction of thousands of Greek Orthodox businesses, homes, and cemeteries. Thousands upon thousands of Greeks fled the country in the aftermath.

The Greek Orthodox community in Turkey has been reduced to a fraction of what it once was, yet in light of such violence, the confiscation of thousands of Ecumenical Patriarchal properties, and restrictions of religious freedom of the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All-Holiness has found ways to cooperate and work constructively with the Muslim majority in his homeland of Turkey. The Ecumenical Patriarch has much to bring to the table regarding today's crisis for Christians in Muslim majority countries.

RECOGNIZING COLONEL VICTOR
GABRIEL GARCIA

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 16, 2016

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend Colonel Victor Gabriel Garcia, Information Operations Chief for CENTCOM, for his work combatting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In

the last two years, ISIL has developed and implemented never before seen tactics by using social media to recruit foreign fighters and the internet to propagate and instill fear. With the emergence of this continually evolving threat, Colonel Garcia has overhauled and expanded the CENTCOM J39 directorate to counter ISIL's internet propaganda machine.

Currently, he is spearheading an effort for the Department of Defense to train and equip a joint force capable of addressing emerging terrorist threats on the internet and social media. They plan to develop a permanent and suitable solution to incorporate the policy, personnel, training, and facilities for all military commanders across the Department of Defense to better understand the tactics of ISIL as well as engage and influence their target audience.

Additionally, Colonel Garcia and his team are in the process of developing a Web Operations Center for the Department of Defense. For the first time, the Department of Defense plans to have a centralized location where hostile internet activity can be monitored and addressed accordingly. This will provide an early warning system to assist military commanders with a variety of operations and allow them to react quickly, possibly saving the lives of our troops.

I am grateful for Colonel Garcia's admirable service and dedication in developing countermeasures against ISIL.

TRIBUTE TO SHAREF AL NAJJAR
FOR HIS EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTIONS ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF THE 18TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF TEXAS AND THE UNITED STATES

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 16, 2016

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, it is no exaggeration to say that the past several years have been among the most challenging in our nation's history. The collapse of the housing market, the turmoil on Wall Street and the ensuing financial crisis, the severe economic downturn of 2008 which saw the loss of millions of middle-class jobs, and the ever present threat of terrorist attacks on our homeland are enough to make many question whether the American Dream is still attainable and to conclude that our best days are behind us.

I do not share this view. The future of our country is bright and I firmly believe that our best days lay ahead. One of the reasons I am so optimistic that the 21st century will be known as the second "American Century" is the extraordinary quality, talent, commitment, and energy of the young people who will in time assume the responsibility of leadership.

Mr. Speaker, as Members of Congress we know well, perhaps better than most, how blessed our nation is to have in reserve such exceptional young men and women who will go on to become leaders in their local communities, states, and the nation in the areas of business, education, government, philanthropy, the arts and culture, and the military.

We know this because we see them and benefit from their contributions every day.