

and short-term disability insurance allowing coverage for non-work-related injury or illness or pregnancy, can also likely increase recruitment and retention of employees by the federal government.

I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

RECOGNIZING ALICE SEFCIK  
SULAK

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 14, 2019*

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Madam Speaker, I'm honored to recognize the incredible life and achievements of Alice Sefcik Sulak of Temple, Texas. Her contributions to the region, as well as her commitment to maintaining the proud traditions of her Czech ancestry, have made her a beloved member of the Central Texas community.

Renowned for both her singing voice as well as her abilities to play multiple instruments, Alice was one of Texas' pioneering Czech vocalists who distinguished herself as an accomplished and respected musician with a distinctive and recognizable style. Throughout her life, she both mentored young musicians and helped popularize Czech music throughout Texas.

Alice remains a vital member of the Temple community. In 1923, her parents built Tom Sefcik Hall, a classic Texas dance hall. Alice grew up working at the hall, and in 1970 she took over the operation, which she continues to run today. Sefcik Hall is a community gathering place and the site of countless first dates, weddings, anniversary celebrations, birthday parties, and family reunions. While the number of dance halls across Texas are dwindling, the lights remain on at Sefcik Hall, where new memories are made every day.

Recognizing her invaluable contributions, the City of Temple has proclaimed November 17, 2019 as "Alice Sefcik Sulak Day." She is truly a local treasure and a fitting recipient of our recognition and appreciation. Her commitment to investing her gifts, talents, and abilities to improve her community is a deeply held creed that speaks to the generosity of a true and devoted citizen.

Alice Sefcik Sulak's life is the story of a woman unafraid to chase her passions and devote her time to make good communities great. I join all Temple residents in celebrating her on this special day.

GRAVE CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE  
OF JOSE DANIEL FERRER

HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 14, 2019*

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Madam Speaker, I am gravely concerned for the welfare of Jose Daniel Ferrer, a courageous Cuban pro-democracy activist and hero of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU).

Ferrer was seized on October 1, 2019, and remains held without access to family, friends, legal counsel, international human rights

groups, or other concerned members of his organization.

Human rights groups including Amnesty International have cited alarming but unverified reports of torture and maltreatment at the hands of the regime's thugs, including the withholding of necessary medical care, food and water.

It is a disgrace that the King and Queen of Spain are in Cuba, while Ferrer languishes in prison, and have failed to exercise simple human decency by demanding his release, or meeting with other courageous independent democracy and human rights activists.

The regime in Cuba has the blood of innocents on its hands, those whose only "crime" was daring to speak against the evils of the dictatorship including:

Orlando Zapata Tamayo, who died in state custody on February 23, 2010; Juan Wilfredo Soto Garcia, who died on May 8, 2011;

Laura Pollan, the renowned leader of the Ladies in White, who died under suspicious circumstances on October 14, 2011;

Wilman Willar Mendoza, who died on January 19, 2012;

Armando Sosa Fortuny, who died on October 28, 2019;

We also remember Oswaldo Paya and Harold Cepero of the Christian Liberation Movement, both of whom died on July 22, 2012 in a suspicious car accident that has not been fully and appropriately investigated.

The regime of firing squads, political prisoners, the Tugboat Massacre, the Brothers to the Rescue shootdown, the Black Spring, and the murders of activists continues its evils to this day. It continues to intimidate, detain, encourage acts of repudiation, and inflict brutal violence to suppress the Cuban people.

Jose Daniel Ferrer must be released immediately and without condition, and those who participate in vile human rights abuses must be held accountable. The world is watching. Should any harm come to Ferrer, the murderous Cuban dictatorship headed by Raúl Castro and his puppet Miguel Diaz-Canel bear sole responsibility.

RECOGNIZING MARY LAFORGE  
FOR THE 2019 MONTANA CONGRESSIONAL  
VETERAN COMMENDATION

HON. GREG GIANFORTE

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 14, 2019*

Mr. GIANFORTE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mary LaForge of Crow Agency for the Montana Congressional Veteran Commendation for her service to her country and service to fellow veterans at Crow Agency.

Ms. LaForge served in the United States Air Force as a reprographic specialist. She received multiple commendation during her time in the Air Force, including the Air Force Overseas Service Ribbon and the Good Conduct Medal.

At the Crow Agency, Ms. LaForge has played a large role in providing many services to her fellow veterans. She coordinated with the Billings Vet Center to ensure mental health services are provided to Crow Agency veterans, assisted others with enrolling in pro-

grams with the Department of Veteran Affairs, and brought veteran employment fairs and job opportunities to the agency. Additionally, she placed a key role in organizing the Yellowstone Homeless Veterans Stand Down.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in commending Mary LaForge for her dedication and service to her country and community.

CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF  
AUSTIN TICE

SPEECH OF

HON. DEREK KILMER

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 12, 2019*

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, more than seven years ago, Austin Tice, an American journalist and Marine Corps veteran, disappeared in Syria.

Since the day he vanished, his parents, family, friends, and supporters, have worked tirelessly to ensure that no stone is left unturned and no avenue ignored to see Austin return home safely.

In the seventh year of Austin's captivity, I ask that whomever holds Austin release him immediately so that he can return to his loved ones.

I also ask the assistance of the Government of Syria to do whatever it can to help facilitate Austin's release.

There are things that transcend politics and diplomacy, bridge cultural divides, and need no translation across different languages.

Those are things like love and hope—represented by a mother and father who wake up each day with deep love and concern for their son and the belief that today could be the day when they get the chance to hug him again.

I ask for the help of whomever holds Austin and can assist with his release—without the assignment of blame or malice to anyone—so that this year is the last that Austin remains so far from home and his family.

HONORING ROSA EMILIA  
RODRÍGUEZ-VÉLEZ

HON. JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 14, 2019*

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the distinguished career of the honorable Rosa Emilia Rodríguez-Vélez, on her retirement as U.S. Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico.

The experience and commitment of U.S. Attorney Rodríguez-Vélez has been vital in the Puerto Rico District. Her record in this office is of outstanding performance in the face of the great challenges in the fight against violent crime, drug and arms trafficking, national security threats, human trafficking, organized crime, illegal entry into the U.S., and most notably the fight against public corruption.

U.S. Attorney Rosa Emilia Rodríguez-Vélez has served the public interest since 1977 in the Puerto Rico Department of Justice and since 1988 in the U.S. Attorney's Office. In that role she held numerous key positions in her career as First Assistant U.S. Attorney,