

CONGRATULATING EMILY GRAHAM AS 2025 SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Emily Graham for being named the 2025 Savannah-Chatham County Public School Teacher of the Year.

Emily has demonstrated her passion and devotion for teaching by serving as a band director at Islands High School in Savannah.

The band program's start and growth are attributable to her work, as Emily has spent the past 14 years instructing the 9th through 12th grade music classes.

Throughout her career, she has been responsible for expanding the band program, the instrument and music library, establishing both marching and jazz bands, among other accomplishments.

Emily developed a love for music and performance throughout her childhood. Following high school graduation, she attended Columbus State University where she received a bachelor of music in music education and subsequently earned her master's degree in the subject.

She chose to return to her hometown of Savannah to pursue a career of service and self-fulfillment.

I would like to extend my gratitude to teachers like Emily who significantly impact those young minds and prepare children for a future success.

HONORING THE LIFE OF KATHRYN HOOPER MCCURRY

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of Kathryn Hooper McCurry who passed away on November 22, 2023.

In 1970, Kathryn graduated from Georgia Southern College where she was the inaugural president of the Delta Lambda Chapter of the Kappa Delta sorority.

Later that year, she married her lifelong confidant and love, James McCurry.

For more than five decades, Kathy remained a dedicated member of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, contributing her time to various positions in the church, such as serving in the choir and altar guild.

Her community involvement extended beyond the church walls, reaching into the junior league of Savannah and an array of clubs, organizations, and boards.

As a passionate tennis enthusiast, Kathy held the title of president of the Savannah Tennis Association. Kathy found joy in traveling alongside friends, waterskiing, crabbing off the dock with her grandchildren, and being surrounded by her loved ones.

Madam Speaker, she will be greatly missed by all.

#### WE NEED TO END ILLEGAL DEFORESTATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from

Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, in 2022, the world lost more than 16 million acres of forest, an area bigger than West Virginia. Deforestation accounted for about 10 percent of the world's annual greenhouse gas emissions and 40 percent of all tropical deforestation as a result of illegal clearing.

Put another way, deforestation would rank as the third largest country in terms of overall carbon emissions, underscoring the need to address this problem as part of a global solution to the climate crisis.

Nearly half of the tropical deforestation is estimated to be the result of just four commodities—beef, soy, palm oil, and wood products that drive this deforestation. The people who are engaged in illegal logging are some of the worst people on the face of the planet. They engage in bribery, theft, crimes against indigenous people whose rights are trampled on, or worse, actual violence directed against them.

There is, of course, a solution: Deny people who grow crops on illegally forested land access to the American economy.

There is precedent here, too. I had amendments to the Lacey Act focusing on disallowing illegally harvested timber to be imported to the United States. That earlier legislation was based on the success of the original Lacey Act that protected endangered species and wildlife. It is commonly accepted and simple to administer, although not always easy.

It required companies to control their supply chain and to be able to document that control and respect for requirements of legally sourced product. It formed a framework not just for American law, but it modeled the European Union, Australia, and Japan who modeled their actions on my bill.

Now, we have an opportunity to expand this approach to soy, cocoa, palm oil, beef, and rubber commodities. There is rough agreement that this approach has promise and the large companies are concerned about the legal, practical, and reputational consequences that are grown on these illegally harvested lands.

We have introduced bipartisan legislation, the FOREST Act with Senator SCHATZ, to codify the conversation and to advance this policy to choke off this practice.

The goal of the legislation is to encourage responsible companies to observe requirements to avoid products from illegally harvested timberland.

It will require adjustment in terms of mindset and procedures to have control of the supply chain, but helping provide a framework is necessary to change these engrained habits.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support our legislation to use the tools of trade and supply chain control to end the environmentally destructive pat-

tern of commodities from illegally harvested land. It is going to be hard, but it will be worth the effort.

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#### HONORING POLICE OFFICER MATTHEW RUGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. FINSTAD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FINSTAD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to remember the life of Police Officer Matthew Ruge, a southern Minnesota hero who was one of three first responders shot and killed in the line of duty on February 18.

Officer Ruge's life was tragically taken at the young age of 27 while responding to a domestic violence call in Burnsville, Minnesota.

Matthew grew up in Read's Landing, a small, tight-knit community just outside Wabasha. From an early age, Matthew knew he wanted to help and protect people. He attended Wabasha-Kellogg High School and was awarded a scholarship for students entering a law enforcement career.

Afterward, he completed a police training program at Mankato State University with high honors and, 2 years later, joined the Burnsville Police Department, where he earned the Life Saving Medal and served on the crisis negotiation team.

While he didn't like being the center of attention, he had an unwavering commitment to serving others. Officer Matthew Ruge was the very best of law enforcement, always there to help a person on their worst day.

My prayers are with his parents, Sean and Christi; his sister, Hannah; and the many friends and family that Matthew touched throughout his life.

Officer Ruge was among the best and bravest of southern Minnesota. We will never forget his service and sacrifice. May he rest in peace.

HONORING FIREFIGHTER-PARAMEDIC ADAM FINSETH

Mr. FINSTAD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of a southern Minnesota hero, firefighter, and paramedic, Adam Finseth, who was tragically killed in the line of duty, along with Officers Paul Elmstrand and Matthew Ruge, while responding to the scene of a domestic violence call on February 18.

Adam was born in Faribault, Minnesota, before moving to Rochester, where he graduated from John Marshall High School in 2001.

Early on, it was obvious that Adam had been called to a life of service. After graduation, he took a summer job as a Rochester lifeguard before enlisting in the U.S. Army shortly after 9/11.

Adam served two tours of duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom and would go on to spend nearly a decade serving as a first responder for fire departments in La Crosse, Hastings, Savage, and Burnsville.