

TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF RODNEY  
MAURICE GILBERT

**HON. DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 14, 2017*

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the life and legacy of Rodney Maurice Gilbert, a giant in New Jersey arts and social justice activism. For the past fifteen years, Mr. Gilbert led Yendor Productions, a Newark-based firm he founded in order to develop and produce arts education programming that elevates oppressed voices. He was a dedicated artist, educator, and community leader.

Mr. Gilbert devoted his life to helping underserved communities find their artistic voices. After graduating from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Mr. Gilbert spent three decades serving the arts community in New Jersey. He was an accomplished actor with credits on stages from Broadway to Little Rock. He was a gifted director known for shining artistic light on social issues such as mental illness. And he was an educator who inspired young artists to bring to life the untold stories of underserved communities.

Mr. Gilbert left a lasting impact on New Jersey. He helped heal Newark by paving the way for people to use arts and culture as vehicles for advancing social justice. Mr. Gilbert brought people together. He inspired young people. And he created a platform for people to creatively tell their own stories. In July, Mr. Gilbert directed *Down Neck*, a play written by Pia Wilson that explores the 1967 Newark Rebellion's impacts on the Ironbound neighborhood. His inspirational use of arts as a means to speak truth, preserve history, and pursue justice has left a permanent mark on the New Jersey arts scene.

Mr. Gilbert passed away on November 8, 2017, but his legacy will live on. I ask that my colleagues join me in honoring the life of Rodney Gilbert—artist, teacher, advocate, and friend.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY  
OF REVEREND MARY EDITH  
MOODY

**HON. CEDRIC L. RICHMOND**

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 14, 2017*

Mr. RICHMOND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Reverend Mary Edith Moody, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, who passed away on October 28, 2017 at the age of 91.

Rev. Moody was born on July 29, 1926, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She was one of nine siblings in a family of modest means. Her father, Mr. James Nathaniel Moody Sr., was a supervisor of Negro Schools in West Baton Rouge and her mother was a teacher. After graduating from high school at Southern University Lab School in 1943, she earned two degrees from Southern University: one in business education and the other in secondary education. She later earned a master's degree in education from Louisiana State University and a certificate of theology from the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

Rev. Moody taught English and business education to visually impaired children for more than 30 years at the Louisiana State School for the Blind at Southern University—and was one of five teachers named Outstanding Secondary Educator of America from a field of 5,000 candidates—before retiring from her teaching career to become one of the first female ministers for the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Rev. Moody was ordained in 1976 and assigned to Black Creek AME Church in Darlington that same day. During her pastoral career, she served as pastor at Mount Everett AME Church in St. Helena Parish and Heard AME Church in Baton Rouge and eventually became an associate pastor at Bethel AME Church on South Street.

Rev. Moody received numerous awards for service, commitment and leadership, including the Powell-Reznikoff Award from the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations in 2001 along with the first Mid City Community Lifetime Achievement Medal in 2004 at the age of 77. Also, she was a proud member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., for more than 70 years.

Rev. Moody devoted herself to numerous Baton Rouge community organizations, advocating for children, African Americans, women, the poor, and anyone facing hardship. We cannot match the sacrifices made by Rev. Moody, but surely we can try to match her sense of service. We cannot match her courage, but we can strive to match her devotion.

Rev. Mary Edith Moody survivors include her sister, Ms. Martha E. Moody Boone; Brother, Mr. Charles David Moody, Sr.; and Sister-in-Law, Ms. Dorothy Johnson Moody; twenty-four Nieces and Nephew; a host of Grand-, Great-Grand-, and Great-Great-Great-Nieces and Nephew; and a host of surrogate sons and daughters.

Mr. Speaker, I celebrate the life and legacy of Reverend Mary Edith Moody a beloved daughter, sister, and grandmother as well as a true example of Baton Rouge culture personified.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. JARED HUFFMAN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 14, 2017*

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, November 13, 2017, I was unavoidably detained. As a result, I was absent for Roll Call votes 623 through 625.

Had I been present for Roll Call vote 623, on agreeing to H. Res. 599, I would have voted yes; on Roll Call vote 624, on suspension of the rules and passage of H.R. 3071, I would have voted yes; and on Roll Call vote 625, on approving the journal, I would have voted yes.

H.R. 3705, THE VETERANS FAIR  
DEBT NOTICE ACT OF 2017

**HON. HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.**

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 14, 2017*

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H.R. 3705, the Veterans Fair

Debt Notice Act of 2017. H.R. 3705 modifies the ways that veterans are notified of any outstanding debts from a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) program.

This bill is essential because current VA debt notification letters can be confusing, highly technical, and fail to convey important dates and amounts. This legislation would direct the VA to clarify language in debt notification emails, coordinate email and postal mail notifications, and study the process of debt notification to ensure that messages are communicated effectively. The cost of sending postal mail notifications would also be evaluated in this study.

Congress should take measures to reduce veterans' debt by effectively communicating outstanding payments and due dates. Reducing debt is one of many ways we can ensure a smoother transition into civilian society for our veterans, which is why I support this legislation.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. KEITH ELLISON**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 14, 2017*

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, due to other commitments, I missed the following Roll Call votes. Had I been present, on Roll Call no. 613, I would have voted yes; and on Roll Call no. 614, I would have voted no.

RECOGNIZING THE SMILEY  
FAMILY

**HON. JOHN J. FASO**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 14, 2017*

Mr. FASO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the Smiley Family of Mohonk Mountain House for being named the recipients of the 2017 Legendary Family Historic Hoteliers of the Year by Historic Hotels of America and Historic Hotels Worldwide. This prestigious award acknowledges multigenerational, family-owned historic hotels that are exemplary in both their operation and preservation efforts. It is true testament to the Smiley Family's continued legacy of historical, environmental, and cultural stewardship.

Founded in 1869 by Albert Smiley, the Mohonk Mountain House—a picturesque Victorian castle resort surrounded by vast forests and wildlife—is still owned and operated by the Smiley Family. What makes the Mohonk Mountain House such a prized treasure in the 19th District, and an attraction for travelers worldwide, is the Smiley Family's dedication to conserving the historical integrity of their resort and the land surrounding it.

Using their timeless resort as a catalyst for historical, environmental, and cultural preservation, the Smiley Family has redefined the role of hoteliers and has established a higher standard of excellence. For example, in 1963, the Smiley Family founded the Mohonk Preserve, a nature preserve that safeguards more than 8,000 acres. In 1980, the Smiley Family also founded Mohonk Consultations, a non-profit think tank focused on environmental issues throughout the Hudson Valley.