



Rep. Tom Emmer on Recognizing an outstanding caseworker and dedicated public servant, Barbara Harper

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****HOUSE CHAIR:**

** of my time. Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota, the Majority Whip, Mr. Emmer, for five minutes.

****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize one of our outstanding caseworkers, Barbara Harper. Barbara is retiring at the end of the month after nearly two decades of public service to the people of Minnesota's 6th Congressional District. We're lucky to have Barbara here on the floor today for this speech. This is a bittersweet moment. As the lead caseworker in our office, Barbara repeatedly demonstrated compassion, tenacity, and dedication. These values define public service. Her career as a caseworker began over 18 years ago under Congresswoman Michelle Bachman, who she first met when their children were in school together in Stillwater, Minnesota. Concerned by the curriculum her kids, Ben and Libby, were exposed to in the public school system, Barbara teamed up with other parents, including Representative Bachman, to voice their concerns. It was through this shared passion that Barbara and Michelle developed a friendship. It wasn't until Barbara, her late husband, Larry, and their kids returned from a three-year stay in Singapore for Larry's job that Barbara's career in public service began. Barbara reconnected with Michelle in the grocery store. Michelle remembered Barbara's passion for school choice and concerns with the school system. Barbara went on to help Michelle in her Minnesota Senate campaign as a volunteer scheduler. When Michelle decided to run for Congress, Barbara helped organize and support her campaign. After her victory, Barbara joined the Bachman staff as a caseworker. She has led casework operations for the last 18 years, starting in 2007. Barbara is a total powerhouse. Her efforts alone returned hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars rightfully owed to our constituents. She has helped secure more than \$1 million in federal funds for Minnesotans in the first five months of this year alone. Still, it is the human impact of her work that sets her apart. Barbara helped hundreds of Minnesota families with foreign adoptions, notably reuniting four-year-old Otra, who was in a Kenyan refugee camp with her family in the United States. Otra was a baby when her family left for the U.S. and lacked the proper paperwork to emigrate with them. After years of work, Barbara secured authorization for Otra to enter the U.S. and coordinated with the airport to ensure a smooth arrival. It was an understandably emotional reunion for the family and one that continued to serve as motivation for Barbara as she worked to solve similar cases for other Minnesota families. The walls of Barbara's office are covered with photos of families she's assisted. Thank you cards and drawings from young children as a token of appreciation for her help. Not only does she support families in need, but she actively fights the federal bureaucracy on Minnesotans' behalf. One story involves a simple display of the First Amendment. A constituent of ours had signed and filed its tax return while adding the words, quote, under protest without prejudice. For this, the constituent received a threatening letter from the thugs at the IRS telling him he could be fined \$5,000 for adding those words. Barbara contacted the IRS, stood up for free speech and prevented a fine from ever being levied against him. Barbara represents the best of all of us. She attends community events like the Senior Expo and brings casework directly to constituents. Barbara has held close to 100 hours of mobile service hours across our district. She also led our



office's Congressional Art Competition, a program that actually turned into a passion for her. For years, we struggled to receive submissions, but thanks to Barbara's efforts, the program has turned into one of our most successful outreach projects. The best part is the joy it brings to Barbara when we recognize the young artists and their beautiful work. Barbara's commitment to service is unmatched. She often stayed in our office late into the night and worked weekends to help our constituents. Barbara has left an incredible impact on our community and has touched countless lives, including my own. Anyone who knows Barbara knows she's a devoted patriot. She frequently reminds our legislative team of the importance of our pro-liberty America First principles and she staunchly opposed the big government policy positions of the Obama and Biden administrations. Barbara is one of a kind and my wife Jackie and I will always cherish her friendship. On behalf of our staff, the 6th District and the nation, I say thank you, Barbara, for everything. We wish you all the best in your well-deserved retirement. I urge everyone to thank Barbara for her years of service to this institution. I yield back.

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