

STATE OF ILLINOIS
103rd GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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TRANSCRIPTION DEBATE

81st Legislative Day

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Speaker Burke: "The House will be in order, and Members will be in their chairs. We shall be led in prayer today by Wayne Padget, the Assistant Doorkeeper. Members and guests are asked to refrain from starting their laptops, turn off their cell phones, and rise for the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance."

Assistant Doorkeeper Padget: "Let us pray. Father, you know my needs and concerns. Bless me and those I love, and may today bring me closer to you. These things we pray, Amen."

Speaker Burke: "Amen. We should be led in the Pledge of Allegiance today by Representative Moeller."

Moeller - et al: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Speaker Burke: "Roll Call for Attendance. Leader Gabel is recognized to report any excused absences on the Democratic side of the aisle."

Gabel: "Thank you, Speaker. Let the record show that Representatives Ammons, Buckner, Crespo, Delgado, Faver Dias, Flowers, Gong-Gershowitz, Hoffman, Jones, Katz Muhl, Mayfield, Yang Rohr, and Stava-Murray are excused today."

Speaker Burke: "Leader Keicher is recognized to report any excused absences on the Republican side of the aisle."

Keicher: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Please let the record reflect that Representatives Stephens, Sanalitro, Weaver, Sosnowski, Niemerg, Hauter, and Tipsword are excused for today."

Speaker Burke: "Have all recorded themselves who wish? Mr. Clerk, please take a... the record. There being 98 Members answering

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the roll call, a quorum is present. Mr. Clerk, Committee Reports."

Clerk Hollman: "Committee Reports. Representative Delgado, Chairperson from the Committee on Immigration & Human Rights reports the following committee action taken on March 21, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 5387; and recommends be adopted is House Resolution 628. Representative Scherer, Chairperson from the Committee on Elementary & Secondary Education: Administration, Licensing & Charter Schools reports the following committee action taken on March 21, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 4672, House Bill 5364; do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 4955; and recommends be adopted is Floor Amendment(s) 1 to House Bill 1745 and Floor Amendment(s) 2 to House Bill 5057. Representative Evans, Chairperson from the Committee on Labor & Commerce reports the following committee action taken on March 21, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 4783, House Bill 5028, House Bill 5079, House Bill 5551, House Bill 5572. Representative Walker, Chairperson from the Committee on State Government Administration reports the following committee action taken on March 21, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 4645, House Bill 4910, House Bill 4928, House Bill 4939, House Bill 5349, House Bill 5479, House Bill 5602; do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 4207 and House Bill 4737; recommends be adopted is House Joint Resolution 58, House Resolution 616, House Resolution 639. Representative Gonzalez, Chairperson from the Committee Economic Opportunity & Equity reports the following committee action taken on March 21, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House

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Bill 4959; do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 4441, House Bill 4566, House Bill 5232. Representative Stuart, Chairperson from the Committee on Higher Education reports the following committee action taken on March 21, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 5475; do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 4738; and recommends be adopted is Floor Amendment(s) 1 to House Bill 5655 and House Resolution 569... 596. Representative Slaughter, Chairperson from the Committee on Judiciary - Criminal reports the following committee action taken on March 21, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 3241 and House Bill 5070. Representative Burke, Chairperson from the Committee on Revenue & Finance reports the following committee action taken on March 22, 2024: do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 4636; recommends be adopted is Floor Amendment(s) 2 to House Bill 2232. The Chairperson from the Committee on Police & Fire reported the following committee action taken on March 22, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 5444; do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 4045 and House Bill 5377. Representative Cassidy, Chairperson from the Committee on Restorative Justice reports the following committee action taken on March 22, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 5431. Representative Kifowit, Chairperson from the Committee on Personnel & Pensions reports the following committee action taken on March 22, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 1147, House Bill 1185, House Bill 4784, House Bill 5261, House Bill 5264, and House Bill 5266. Representative LaPointe, Chairperson from the Committee on Mental Health & Addiction reports the following committee action taken on March 22,

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2024: do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 4665. Representative Mason, Chairperson from the Committee on Child Care Access & Early Childhood Education reports the following committee action taken on March 22, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 4521; and do pass as amended Short Debate is House Bill 5451."

Speaker Burke: "Representative Caulkins, for what reason do you seek recognition?"

Caulkins: "Good morning... or good afternoon, Madam Speaker. Point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Burke: "Please proceed."

Caulkins: "Thank you very much. Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, I rise today. I want to thank Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman for establishing the legal precedent that you don't need a FOID card or a Conceal Carry License to own a gun in Illinois. That's right. The State of Illinois has refused to prosecute Mr. Flores for owning a pistol and carrying it on his person without a FOID card or a Conceal Carry permit. Yes, all you have to do is not get arrested, hold a job, not be a threat to persons and property, even though he was pointing a gun and shooting at cars. Now, it doesn't matter that he broke the law when illegally entering this country. It doesn't matter that he broke federal law that prohibits any noncitizen who is not legally authorized to be in the United States from possessing a firearm. So, here's the questions, Ladies and Gentlemen. How did this case ever get to court? Where was the AG in prosecuting this criminal? Where's the state's attorney prosecuting this criminal? Where's the Moms Demand Action going after this criminal? Why shouldn't gun owners across

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the state cut up our FOID cards and be able to buy guns out of state with no worry? Again, I want to thank Judge Johnson Coleman for making the FOID card irrelevant and law enforcement in Illinois for finally admitting it cannot and will not enforce this law. Afterall, if a person who is not legally in this state can have his constitutional rights, so can the rest of us."

Speaker Burke: "Representative La Ha, for what reason do you rise?"

La Ha: "Point of personal privilege."

Speaker Burke: "Please proceed."

La Ha: "The month of March is recognized as Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month, with March 25 being national Cerebral Palsy Day when we wear green. CP is the most common motor disability of childhood, with it occurring 1 in 345 children. Cerebral palsy is often abbreviated as CP. It's not just a medical condition. It's a lived experience for thousands of people. It's a group of disorders that affect movement, posture, and muscle coordination stemming from damage to the brain usually occurring before or during birth. Despite it being the most common motor disability in childhood, it's a condition that is misunderstood and highly underfunded. This month, as we raise awareness about cerebral palsy, it's important to recognize the diversity within the CP community. It manifests differently in each individual, with various types presenting unique challenges. By understanding and acknowledging this diversity, we can foster empathy, inclusivity, and support all of those affected by CP. As a parent of a child that lives with CP, I know the firsthand of the struggles and the joys

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that come with it. The hardest part for me is seeing my daughter struggle to do simple things. Some things I can't fix. It's something she has to live with, and at times, it brings a lot of pain. But it also brings so much joy and perspective, and for that, we are eternally grateful. Together, let us stand in solidarity with the CP community, reaffirming our commitment to empathy, understanding, and inclusion. This month I celebrate and acknowledge all of those living with cerebral palsy and those who love them. Thank you."

Speaker Burke: "Representative Keicher, for what reason do you rise?"

Keicher: "A point of personal privilege, Ma'am."

Speaker Burke: "Please proceed."

Keicher: "Ladies and Gentlemen of the chamber, I'm sure you've heard me in the past talk about my amazing mother, a single mom who waited tables to keep a roof over our head as we were going through school. Well, today is her 70th birthday, and I would just like to wish mom happy birthday, and thank you for everything that you do."

Speaker Burke: "Representative Weber, for what reason do you rise?"

Weber: "Point of personal privilege, Madam Speaker."

Speaker Burke: "Please proceed."

Weber: "I rise today filled with a mix of frustration and sadness after getting notification last night and seeing on the news something happening in my district. Because this Legislator bowed down to pressure of special interests and failed to preserve the Invest in Kids Tax Credit Scholarship Program,

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St. Bede School in Ingleside, Illinois, which is just up the road from my district office, announced yesterday that it will be closing and shut down at the end of this school year. Perhaps you saw the headline announcement, almost every media outlet has had an article referencing the announcement of the school closure. Children from families in need, families that prayed that we here in the Legislature would hear their call. These are the youth that make up a large portion of students at St. Bede School whom relied on the Invest In Kids Scholarship Program. Quote from St. Bede's Father George Koeune, 'The loss of the state Invest In Kids Scholarship Program created a feeling of uncertainty for the school's future that we could not overcome.' Maybe some of you have forgotten, but those students come from low-income houses, working-class families who were simply trying to send their kids to get something better in their life. But now, those families and all the families who sent their kids to St. Bede's are being kicked to the curb because this Body did not have the courage to extend a scholarship program funded entirely by private donations, not by taxpayer dollars. But it isn't just the families at St. Bede's that are going to suffer. It's tens of thousands of families across this state that are losing access to these vital education opportunities. Perhaps when the schools start closing in your districts, you'll be more willing to join those of us fighting to save these scholarship programs and what they have done for so many families in our state. Thank you."

Speaker Burke: "Representative Andrade, for what reason do you rise? Rep. Andrade, with the Pages. Rep. Andrade."

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Andrade: "Sorry, Madam Speaker. I'm getting old. The hearing is starting to go. Thank you, Madam Speaker. A point of personal privilege."

Speaker Burke: "Please proceed."

Andrade: "Thank you very much. I have two Pages today. I have Genesis. She's a seventh grader at Inter-American, which is Representative Ann Williams' district. She's in student council and year book, an honor student who's on swimming and water polo teams at Gill Park. She's also a blue belt in karate, so she's my bodyguard for today too. And she's here with her mom, Gabriela, and her brother, Nathan, who are up in the stands right over there. Then I have also Alissa Malagón. No, I don't need a... I know Alissa since she's been two years old. She is the daughter of my chief of staff. But she's also the president and... well, actually, the founder of the women's group for politics in school and for women's group Involved. So, she started that. She sees inspiration with her mom, and I told her just wait until I resign until she runs. But also, she is the captain of her cheerleading team, right? She also is... goes to aerial and Extensions and does hip hop after school, and she also teaches the young kids. She's a leader in her school. She's a leader in her classroom. And when she... they hold events in the school, she actually takes the mic and takes control of the room, and she has the confidence of a young lady that will succeed in life. So, I'm very proud to have her here next to me. Alissa Malagón, and her mother is up there, my chief of staff, Elvira. Thank you, Madam... thank you, Madam Speaker."

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Speaker Burke: "Welcome to Springfield. Representative Davidsmeyer, for what reason do you rise?"

Davidsmeyer: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Point of personal privilege."

Speaker Burke: "Please proceed."

Davidsmeyer: "An earlier speaker brought up something that's been a thorn in my side for quite some time. It's the equal application of the law in the State of Illinois. We have laws for a reason, which we create right in this Body. And if we think those laws are not working properly, we should be changing them, not allowing prosecutors to decide whether or not to prosecute these laws. The reality is ever since... ever since I've been old enough to own a gun, I've been a second-class citizen in my own state. I'm here legally. I've filed all the paperwork required of me, and yet, anywhere I go in the United States, I'm held to a different standard than every other United States citizen. We have a recent court case that was mentioned earlier where someone who's here illegally, who does not have a FOID card, does not have a Conceal Carry was held to a different standard than someone who has done everything the right way. Why do we continue, in this state, to go after people who are doing the right thing, abiding by the law, not committing crimes, while we let people who commit crimes, using the same firearms that you're coming after, we don't do anything to them? We don't do anything to them. I've done nothing wrong. My constituents have done nothing wrong. Most of your constituents have done nothing wrong. Can we focus on going after criminals who are doing the wrong thing and not following the law? Thank you."

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Speaker Burke: "Representative Windhorst, for what reason do you rise?"

Windhorst: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Point of personal privilege."

Speaker Burke: "Please proceed."

Windhorst: "Thank you. I'd like to welcome today the... the Miss Illinois Heart Pageant Organization, here today with Alex Austin. Alex worked with me back in the 102nd General Assembly to pass HR126, which designated February as Illinois Heart Month. Alex is here today with her group, the Miss Illinois Heart Pageant Association. That group raises funds for the Illinois Heart Association, and so far, they have donated \$85 thousand to that organization. Today, Alex has with her Hannah Stillman, who is Miss Illinois Heart; Ella Horn, who is Miss Teen Illinois Heart; Dariyn Carney, who is Miss Illinois Heart Junior Teen; Morgan Potts, Miss Illinois Heart Pre-Teen; Bailey Johnson, Miss Illinois Heart Princess; and Mia Davis, Miss Illinois Heart Junior Princess. They are here on the Lincoln side of the gallery, if we could welcome them to Springfield."

Speaker Burke: "Welcome to the Capitol. Representative Grant, for what reason do you rise?"

Grant: "A personal... thank you, Madam Speaker. A personal point of privilege."

Speaker Burke: "Please proceed."

Grant: "Thank you. Representative Weber, of course, has just reminded me about the devastation of having the Invest in Kids Scholarship not renewed. This is our problem. We need to fix it. The day... there's a new day now dawning. The primaries

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are over, I said this earlier in the week, and now we need to start thinking our constituents and stop thinking about ourselves and get to work and help these children. Thank you."

Speaker Burke: "Representative Severin, for what reason do you rise?"

Severin: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Burke: "Please proceed."

Severin: "So, I rise today on one of the last days of this month to recognize what I call amazing women of Illinois. The first-ever biography of trailblazing horse racer Lillian Jenkinson Holder, who broke the unwritten rule that women could not be jockeys. More than 4 decades before women were allowed to ride as licensed jockeys at recognized pari-mutual racetracks, a fearless farm girl turned racer out of Nebraska was beginning her 47-year jockey career at venues beyond the reach of big-time track rules. Her name was Lillian Jenkinson Holder. I'll explain to you why I'm involved with this story in just a moment. In the book that was just written about her, *Jockey Queen*, it tells a remarkable journey of a woman who never gave up on her dream of racing, despite the obstacles thrown in her path. Kept from riding in major races simply because she was a woman, Jenkinson Holder thrived in the gritty world of no-holds-barred 'bush track' racing, ultimately competing in an estimated 10 thousand races over almost 5 decades. She had 3 thousand wins. *Jockey Queen* is a fascinating glimpse into the world of a horseracing and the daring women who defied all expectations. Now, I'm going to tell you how I got to know Lillian Holder. In the last days

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of her life, she came to our nursing home. She was a resident there. The last race that she raced in, on the third curve, her horse had a heart attack, went through the rail, and broke almost every bone in her body. Thus, she comes to Severin Nursing Home. For the first three months she was there, I went every day to stop by her room to try to make friends with her, and this is what she would say. 'What do you want?' That's just how she talked. She was about this tall, and she's the toughest woman I have ever met. I thought my mother was. I thought my wife was. They couldn't hold a candle to Lillian Holder. So, literally for three months, I went to her room and knocked on her door and finally she said, 'Come in.' So, I went into her room, and we became friends. And for the next three months, I visited her every day. We laughed together. We cried together. We joked together. In fact, one day I forgot to go by and see her, and the next day when I went in, you know what she said? 'Where were you yesterday?' That's exactly how she talked. She was one of the toughest women, but she never gave up on her dream. She was the first well-known jockey in the State of Illinois. Her name was Lillian Holder. And I promised her family when they wrote the book about her that I would share this story on the House Floor of Lillian Holder, the lady that was tough as nails, had a heart bigger than a horse. And I... I think today she's in heaven."

Speaker Burke: "Representative Schweizer, for what reason do you rise?"

Schweizer: "My very first point of personal privilege, Madam Speaker."

Speaker Burke: "Take it away."

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Schweizer: "Thank you very much. Ladies and Gentlemen, I rise today to honor Dr. Mary Edwards Walker for Women's History Month. Dr. Walker was born on November 26, 1832 in Oswego, New York. She was the fifth born child to Alvah and Vesta Walker. After graduating high school, Dr. Walker attended Falley Seminary in Fulton, New York, where she studied to become a teacher. However, this was not her calling. What she wanted to do was become a doctor, but medical school was expensive. So, she worked until she was able to save up enough money to pay for it herself. She attended Syracuse Medical College and became the second woman to receive her medical degree from the college in 1855. After graduating, Dr. Walker and her husband, who was also a doctor, started a private medical practice. However, the couple was forced to shut the doors, as the public refused to see a female doctor. In 1861, shortly after closing her medical practice, Dr. Walker, then 29, journeyed to Washington, D.C. and applied to be appointed as an Army surgeon, much to the shock of the medical department, which rejected her offer with considerable verbosity. She was offered an unpaid volunteer position as a nurse and later as a volunteer surgeon. After the Battle of Chickamauga in September 1863, and after hearing many stories told of her bravery under fire, Major General George Thomas appointed Dr. Walker as assistant surgeon in the Army of the Cumberland, becoming the first female U.S. Army surgeon. Dr. Walker was the embodiment of a true field medic. What is common practice now, for medics to render assistance to all wounded persons on the battlefield, was not common practice during the Civil War, except from Dr. Walker. In April 1864,

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having remained behind after a battle to assist wounded troops upon a Union retirement and shortly after assisting a Confederate doctor with an amputation, Dr. Walker was captured by the Confederate military and arrested for spying. After four months of brutality in a Confederate prison, Dr. Walker was released in a prisoner exchange and went to work at the Louisville Women's Prison Hospital and an orphan asylum in Clarksville, Tennessee. When the war ended, Dr. Walker was given a disability pension for muscular atrophy, which she suffered after her time in the... as a prisoner of war. Based on recommendations from her generals, President Andrew Johnson signed a bill on November 11, 1865 to present Dr. Walker with the Medal of Honor for Meritorious Service. Dr. Walker was the first woman and, to this day, the only woman to ever be awarded the Medal of Honor. The citation reads as follows, and I'll ask that you stand up if you're not... if you're able to. 'The President of the United States, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Assistant Surgeon Mary Edwards Walker, United States Civilian, for extraordinary heroism as a Contract Surgeon to the Union Forces. Whereas it appears from official reports that Dr. Mary E. Walker, a graduate of medicine, "has rendered valuable service to the Government, and her efforts have been earnest and untiring in a variety of ways," and that she was assigned to duty and served as an assistant surgeon in charge of female prisoners at Louisville, Kentucky, upon the recommendation of Major Generals Sherman and Thomas, and faithfully served as contract surgeon in the service of the United States, and has devoted herself with much patriotic

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zeal to the sick and wounded soldiers, both in the field and hospitals, to the detriment of her own health, and has also endured hardships as a prisoner of war four months in a Southern prison while acting as contract surgeon; and Whereas by reason of her not being a commissioned officer in the military service, a brevet or honorary rank cannot, under existing laws, be conferred upon her; and Whereas in the opinion of the President an honorable recognition of her services and sufferings should be made: It is ordered, That a testimonial thereof shall be hereby made and given to the said Dr. Mary E. Walker, and that the usual Medal of Honor for Meritorious Service be given to her. Given under my hand in the city of Washington, D.C., this 11th day of November, 1865. Signed, Andrew Johnson, President.' Ladies and Gentlemen, let us never forget the... the sacrifices women have made for this country. And I would be remised if I didn't take this opportunity to recognize two of our own females in this room today, one of those being House Republican photographer and current Air National Guard Master Sergeant Shelly Stark, and my fellow Marine, Representative Stephanie Kifowit. Oorah."

Speaker Burke: "Representative Kifowit, for what reason do you rise?"

Kifowit: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Point of personal privilege."

Speaker Burke: "Please proceed."

Kifowit: "Well, thank you for that shoutout to my fellow Marine on the other side of the aisle. I really appreciate it. But, Members of the House and Madam Speaker, I'm honored today to present for Women's History Month. Women's service has made

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our military stronger. This is a quote from the Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III. 'Women serving in the military was not always recognized as it is today.' In the words of Secretary Austin, on June 12, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed into law the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, which allowed, for the first time, women to serve as regular members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. In our Revolutionary War, as my colleague mentioned earlier, women operated behind enemy lines as spies. In the Civil War, some 3 thousand women served as nurses for the Union Army. And during World War I, women were translators and accountants and they operated the switchboards. Following the World War II service of these women and others like them, U.S. military leaders began to endorse making women full and permanent members of the U.S. armed forces, but it was a challenge. At one hearing in 1948, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee questioned why women should serve in our military on the same basis as men. The first witness to offer testimony and respond was General Dwight D. Eisenhower. He said simply, 'We need them.' Secretary of Defense Austin said the U.S. military is the best fighting force in history and that keeping it that way requires bringing the best war fighters on board in every domain of conflict. He's quoted as saying the only way to make that happen is by drawing on the talents of all our people, not just the men, who happen to represent less than half of the U.S. population. Women in the U.S. military today can serve in combat roles, become Army Rangers, fighter pilots, and four-star generals. And I wanted to highlight a few of the women who have served our country

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proudly. Blanche Slater Osborne was a World War I United States Marine. She lived in Libertyville, Illinois with her husband, a general in the first World War. Before World War II and during World War II, Blanche wrote a column in the *Chicago Herald American* called *The Soldier's Friend*. It served as an information center for veterans and servicemen of the Chicago area. It provided them with information pertaining to veterans' benefits and carried news items such as reunions of old war divisions and buddies, the best leave and liberty spots in Chicago. In addition to her writings, Osborne, during World War II, organized blood banks and stage shows to benefit our service members. Osborne was instrumental in creating the Servicemen's Center of Chicago, and individuals in this room know that today as the USO. And the Illinois Chapter of the Women Marine Association is named after her. Three women Marines have passed in the past few months who were founding members of the Illinois Chapter of the Women Marine Association and researched and named that chapter after Blanche Osborne. Corporal Muriel Underwood passed away at the young age of 100, and she served in the United States Marines from 1943 to 1945 as a mimeograph officer in San Diego. Corporal Helen Ehlers also passed away recently at the young age of 100, and she served from 1944 to 1946 in the United States Marines as Marine Corps Air Station, Chery Point, North Carolina and was trained on aircraft instrument mechanics and then worked in the shop repairing and calibrating them for the planes that flew over World War II. Sergeant Mary Rodriguez Roa passed away at the young age of 97, and she served in the United States Marines from 1950

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to 1952 and was a clerk typist at Headquarters Marine Corps Henderson Hall in Washington, D.C. While these three amazing women aren't common names in our history books, they served proudly with honor and were very active in not only their community but the military community, and I am cherished to have been able to call them my friends as well. However, I would like to highlight a few women veterans who have made it to our history books for our nation as well as Illinois. U.S. Army Sergeant Maciel Hay became the first active-duty female U.S. Army sniper in 2023. This was something that wasn't available to my generation of women veterans but is available today to our future generation of women veterans... women service members. Lieutenant General Jody Daniels, 1982, first female deep-sea diver for the Army. Staff Sergeant Elizabeth Cox was the first female Army Guard M1 Abrams Tank Master Gunner. Staff Sergeant Bea Arthur, she was in the Marine Corps. Remember her from the *Golden Girls*? She was the first female member of the Women's Reserve. Army General Ann Dunwoody, the first woman to serve as a four-star general in both the Army and in the U.S. armed forces. Commodore Grace Murray Hopper, her importance in U.S. Naval history is apparent everywhere you turn. A destroyer was named after her, the USS Hopper, and was the Cray XE6 'Hopper' supercomputer for our service members. Colonel Ellen (sic-Eileen) Collins was the first woman to command a space shuttle mission. Second Lieutenant Elsie Ott, a flight nurse on the first intercontinental air evacuation flight that demonstrated the potential of air evacuation for our service members. Master Sergeant Andrea Motley Crabtree, first female

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deep-sea diver in the Army. Lastly, Illinois' own retired Colonel Jill Morgenthaler, who I knew personally and miss her every day, was a woman of many firsts. She was one of the first women to enter ROTC and to train as an equal with men. She was the first female company commander in the Army Security Agency group Korea, first woman battalion commander in the 88th Regional Support Command, and she was the first woman brigade commander of the 84th Division, commanding hundreds of soldiers across six states. In Illinois, her hometown, she was the first woman to lead Homeland Security. I want to thank the Members of the House of Representatives for giving me the distinction and the honor to highlight these distinguished veteran women of Illinois and in our nation for Women's History Month. And I also want to say that my three friends that have passed onto post everlasting, they're guarding the pearly gates of heaven, and I miss them as well. Thank you, Members."

Speaker Burke: "Representative Williams, for what reason do you rise?"

Williams, A.: "Point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Burke: "Please proceed."

Williams, A.: "Today, for Women's History Month, I want to highlight someone who I met just recently, but who was so impressive to me that I wanted to share her story with all of you. She is making history right now, every day in the Chicago neighborhood of Roscoe Village. Her name is Cera Muchiri, and she is the owner of a new shop in the Chicago neighborhood of Roscoe Village called Ecodunia. It's a woman-owned, black-owned business which sells sustainably sourced and ethically-

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made goods from Kenya. But there is so much more to this story. Yes, they may have beautiful things for sale, lovely handmade bags, artifacts, other products from Africa, but when I met and talked with Cera and visited her shop recently, I was blown away by how it came to be. For Cera it's much more than a business. It's the manifestation of a dream to provide sustainable and inclusive opportunities for women half a world away. Cera grew up in rural Kenya. She described her early childhood as idyllic. Not because they had a lot, but because they had what they needed: family, friends, space to be a child. But all that changed for Cera during... at the age of nine, during the civil war, she was displaced and her family forced to live in the slums of Nairobi. She and her family were crammed into quarters facing daily struggles, where she, her family, and neighbors had few resources and opportunities. But it was that experience that put this amazing woman on a path to lift up her home community and provide people living there with opportunities to thrive. Resourceful and super smart, Cera found her way to study at UCLA, where she focused on international development and entrepreneurship. Driven by her early life experiences, she wanted her efforts to create dignified work opportunities for those who had been left behind by our global economy. After literally years of planning, creating, and a lot of trial and error, she opened a workshop in Nairobi, managed it from Chicago, where she employs over 10 women from Kenya and trains them to become artisans, creating beautiful bags made of canvas, leather goods, which she sales at Ecodunia, along with other handcrafts, soaps, and teas from Kenya. I was

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hoping to bring one of her fabulous bags to show all of you, but I'll do that in a couple of weeks 'cause they are amazing. It took so much hard work, creativity, and commitment to get her workshop and store up and running and to keep it going strong. She just got a brick-and-mortar location in my community. But she is changing lives, and she has forever impacted the women she employs in Kenya. They now earn a good wage, and they can provide for their families. That's a real change for them. She's also giving us something too. She's giving us the opportunity to play a small part in the effort to make the world a better place by using our spending power in a way that is responsible and ethical and sustainable. The name of Cera's shop, Ecodunia, really captures her vision for the project, dunia being the Swahili word for world. As a Chicagoan with her roots in Kenya, she found a way to establish an impactful connection between two places half a world away from each other. So, if you ever are in the 11th District and find yourself in the Roscoe Village neighborhood, please stop by and talk to Cera. You can meet this real live history maker in person, browse her beautiful shop, and say hello. Her business smile is unique and her story very powerful. Cera Muchiri has found a way to change the world one person, one product at a time, and she's truly making history. Thank you all."

Speaker Burke: "And, Representative Gill, for what reason do you rise?"

Gill: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. A point of... point of personal privilege, please. Oh, my God, been a... been a week, guys. Been a week."

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Speaker Burke: "Please go... please go ahead."

Gill: "As we conclude this year's recognition of Women's History Month, I want to highlight the women here at the Capitol today, that they are making the history of tomorrow. We're fortunate to have so many wonderful and talented staff members who help us every single day, and I'm obsessed with all of you. They put in long hours, make sacrifices, and are always there to make us to look good. They fundamentally understand the importance and impact of our work here and are always ready and willing to do what it takes. Never expecting recognition but simply promising thoroughness and dedication to the work, the women of our staff make up many of the unsung heroes who allow us to focus on what truly matters, curating a brighter future for tomorrow. We have great women staff leaders with us here right now. On the Democratic side, I want to highlight and thank Tiffany, Jaclyn, Endra, and Kylie for their leadership. They're mentoring a new generation of women staffers throughout this building, and I want to recognize those amazing young women as well. We should also thank our staff back home in our district. Megan, if you're watching, I am obsessed with you. Thank you so much for all you do for me and our team. I love you. There are a lot of women staff members in our field who are... who are the first in some way. They're serving as role models, developing support networks, and carving new paths for the next generation. So, if you get a minute, please make sure to show appreciation to the staff members who work with you. Thank you again for everything you do, and happy Women's History Month."

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Speaker Burke: "Mr. Clerk, Agreed Resolutions."

Clerk Hollman: "Agreed Resolutions. House Resolution 668, offered by Representative Jiménez. And House Resolution 669, offered by Representative Gordon-Booth."

Speaker Burke: "Leader Gabel moves for the adoption of the Agreed Resolutions. All those in favor say 'aye'; all those opposed say 'nay'. In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the Agreed Resolutions are adopted. And now, allowing perfunctory time for the Clerk, Leader Gabel moves that the House stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 2. All those in favor say 'aye'; all those opposed say 'nay'. In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the House stands adjourned."

Clerk Hollman: "House Perfunctory Session will come to order. Introduction and First Reading of House Bills. House Bill 5789, offered by Representative Jawaharial Williams a Bill for an Act concerning appropriations. House Bill 5790, offered by Representative Cabello, a Bill for an Act concerning local government. House Bill 5791, offered by Representative Buckner, a Bill for an Act concerning gaming. First Reading of these House Bills. There being no further business, the House Perfunctory Session will stand adjourned."