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Remarks by the Honorable Donald S. Beyer Jr.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF JOSEPH MCCOY AND BENJAMIN THOMAS

Madam Speaker, I rise in memory of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas – and to commend the City of Alexandria for its work on the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project (ACRP).

Through its partnership with the Equal Justice Initiative, the ACRP has brought our community together to remember the city's history of racial terror and to memorialize Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas, who were lynched in 1897 and 1899, respectively. These lynchings were two of 86 documented lynchings committed in Virginia between 1880 and 1930. These acts of premeditated violence were deliberate attempts by whites to terrorize and control black populations across the state.

As our community convenes again on September 24, 2022 we do so to collect soil representing these two young men's lives. In October, Alexandrians will then make a pilgrimage to Montgomery, Alabama to deliver this sacred soil to its final resting place at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

These events also occur during a year in which the *Emmitt Till Antilynching Act*, a federal bill making lynching a federal hate crime, was signed into law by President Biden on March 29. I was proud to support this long overdue legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives, but also recognize that we still have much more work to do.

It is incumbent on all of us to remember this shameful episode of our history and others like it. In doing so, we are better able to see the continuous chain of racially motivated violence against Black Americans that spans our nation's history. We can truly honor the memories of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas, along with the countless number of named and unnamed victims of racial violence, by seeking justice for all Americans and working to build a more inclusive society.

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