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HON. MATT CARTWRIGHT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2023

**IN RECOGNITION OF WWII U.S. ARMY VETERAN
SERGEANT JOSEPH DRAKE**

Mr. Speaker, today I recognize the bravery and valor of U.S. Army Veteran Sergeant Joseph Drake, recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal and one of only 12 remaining WWII Army Rangers. Born on October 24, 1924, Sgt. Drake recently celebrated his 99th birthday with family and friends at his home in Hawley, PA, where he currently resides.

As the member of the U.S. House representing Hawley, in Wayne County, I am grateful to have this opportunity to recognize the courage, dedication and selfless service that Sgt. Drake offered in support of our Nation during WWII in April of 1943 at just 19 years old.

Sgt. Drake honorably served with Company A of the U.S. Army Ranger Battalion and after training in Mississippi, Louisiana and England he fought in five battles in the European Theater, including the Battle of the Bulge and Central Europe. His outfit spearheaded the invasion of Europe by climbing the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc on D-Day on June 6, 1944.

Sgt. Drake proudly recalls Company A moving to relieve a Battalion from the PA National Guard's 28th Infantry Division in Ardennes during the initial German attack that led to the Battle of the Bulge. Sgt. Drake and his Company fought through Luxemburg, Belgium, Germany and Czechoslovakia until the end of WWII in 1945.

Sgt. Drake's distinguished service has earned him many medals, including this institution's highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions – the Congressional Gold Medal.

Upon returning to the United States in October of 1945, Sgt. Drake was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army in December and started a family with his late wife, the former Lydora LaTournous, in Hawley. They were married on September 23, 1950, and raised two daughters and one son. Life gifted them with many grand and great-grandchildren.

Shortly after arriving back home, Sgt. Drake joined the U.S. Postal Service and worked there for 34 years, 15 of which he was the Hawley postmaster. He's proud to be the first person from Hawley, and without a political appointment, to have served in this position.

Sgt. Drake was active in his community, serving as Quartermaster and Treasurer with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 5823 in Hawley, founded by his late brother Robert J. Drake. He worked with the Mayor of Hawley and others to plan parades and carnivals. After the post disbanded in 2008, he made arrangements to have the post headquarters on Park Place turned over to the County of Wayne, for the Hawley Senior Center.

Sgt. Drake's devotion to our Nation is evident in his exemplary military career, and I thank him for his service while wearing, and after hanging up his uniform. He truly embodies what it means to be one of the few remaining members of the "Greatest Generation."

Sgt. Drake is a true American hero whose commitment to duty and service distinguishes him as an individual whose character represents the very best of Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District, and I am proud to be his Representative in Washington.

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