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## *House of Representatives*

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 45TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE THURSDAY LUNCHEON GROUP

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**HON. GREGORY W. MEEKS**  
OF NEW YORK  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
*Wednesday, June 19, 2019*

**MR. MEEKS.** Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the Thursday Luncheon Group, an organization that serves as an effective platform to help African-Americans play an equitable role in the formulation, articulation, and implementation of U.S. foreign policy. When I travel the world, I witness firsthand the importance of having an inclusive diplomatic corps reflecting the American people's rich cultural tapestry. As the U.S. Department of State's oldest Employee Affinity Group, TLG has been instrumental in leading the charge to promote diversity within the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

In 1973, two senior USIA Officers, William B. Davis and Robert A. Dumas, urged their friends at USIA, the State Department, and USAID to consider what could be done to encourage a significant role for African Americans in foreign affairs. These founding members began meeting regularly on the first Thursday of every month to discuss issues affecting the careers of African American Foreign Service and Civil Service personnel and to create space for open exchanges with guest speakers. This group of trailblazers understood then, as we fully appreciate now, the struggle for representation is often long but begins with a dedicated few.

Nearly five decades later, the Thursday Luncheon Group has over 500 members, including retired and current Department of State and USAID employees, and dedicated members from five other federal agencies. Their members have taken prominent roles in the development and execution of U.S. foreign policy, including Chiefs of Mission, Career Ambassadors, and Assistant Secretaries. TLG members monitor recruitment, assignments, employment practices, training and other matters of vital interest to minorities at the State Department and USAID.

In addition, TLG works to improve the career development and networking opportunities among their members. The organization is committed to mentoring entry-level and mid-level officers in an effort to prepare them to become the future leaders in international affairs.

What is most impressive is their commitment to giving back. The organization sponsors two paid summer internships at the Department of State. TLG also established the Terence A. Todman Book scholarship (named after the first African American to be named Career Ambassador, the highest rank among the diplomatic corps) for students at eight Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

With the Thursday Luncheon Group's strong commitment to diversity and excellence in international affairs, TLG has set the standard for all other affinity to follow. I congratulate the members of the Thursday Luncheon Group for forty-five years of service to our country. Our country is better because of your service.