

Nationally televised speech to honor BC3 grad, 80

U.S. Rep. Kelly to recognize college's most senior graduate from House floor

May 15, 2018

(Washington, D.C.) An 80-year-old Butler County Community College student and Air Force veteran will be recognized in a nationally televised speech Wednesday morning from the U.S. House of Representatives.

U.S. Rep. Mike Kelly, R-3, will honor William "Don" Thomas, of Saxonburg, who will become BC3's most senior graduate ever at the time of commencement when he earns an associate of arts degree in history Wednesday night.

Thomas, a 1955 graduate of Wilkinsburg High, began his pursuit of an associate degree by taking University of Maryland night courses while stationed in Nancy, France, with the 17th Squadron from 1956 to 1959. Thomas enrolled at BC3 in 2010 and earned 41 credits.

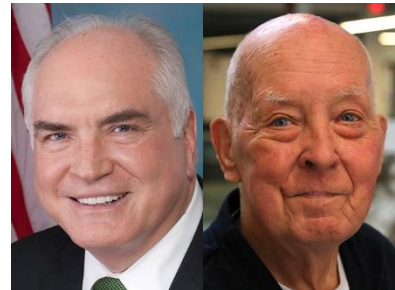
The father of six, grandfather of eight and great-grandfather of four has displayed "unwavering dedication and perseverance in all aspects of life," Tom Qualtere, Kelly's spokesman, said Monday.

"His story has the ability to inspire and encourage anyone who has an unfinished goal. Representative Kelly considers Mr. Thomas to be an extraordinary citizen and an embodiment of classic American determination."

It is never too late to better oneself, said Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of BC3.

"Mr. Thomas is an inspiration to all of us," Neupauer said. "His determination is remarkable. We are honored he chose BC3 in his educational journey."

Kelly's speech, scheduled for 10 a.m., will be broadcast live on C-SPAN, a cable network that reaches nearly 100 million households. It will also be available on C-SPAN.org.



U.S. Rep. Mike Kelly, R-3, left, will recognize William "Don" Thomas, 80, of Saxonburg, right, from the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives during a speech on Wednesday morning. Thomas will become Butler County Community College's most senior graduate ever when he earns an associate of arts degree in history Wednesday night.

“Sometimes I am overawed,” Thomas said Monday. “It’s an honor that not many older guys have before them.”

Kelly’s speech will also be submitted into the Congressional Record, the official record of congressional proceedings and debates, and titled “Honoring William ‘Don’ Thomas – The Most Senior Graduate from Butler County Community College,” Qualtere said.

Kelly’s office will provide Thomas with a physical copy of the statement, Qualtere said.

Thomas also represents the most senior Class of 2018 graduate among the state’s four other western institutions within the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges – the Community College of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh; the Community College of Beaver County, Monaca; Penn Highlands Community College, Johnstown; and Westmoreland County Community College, Youngwood.

The statement will be available for viewing by the public by visiting <https://www.congress.gov>.