

WEST WARWICK FIRE VICTIMS—CONDOLENCES

Mar. 13, 2003
[H. Con. Res. 85]

- Whereas, on the night of February 20, 2003, a pyrotechnic display ignited a massive fire at The Station nightclub in West Warwick, Rhode Island;
- Whereas 99 people have died as a result of the fire and an additional 186 people were injured in the fire, many of whom remain hospitalized as of the date of the submission of this resolution with life-threatening burns and other injuries;
- Whereas the victims of the fire were residents of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and several other States;
- Whereas the firefighters, police officers (particularly officers of the West Warwick Police Department who were the first to arrive on the scene), and medical personnel who responded to the fire performed heroically under horrific circumstances, and they risked their own lives to save many of the injured;
- Whereas, at hospitals in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, doctors, nurses, hospital staff, mental health professionals, and other health care workers toiled through the night and in the following days to care for the injured, and they continue to provide world-class care to victims of the fire who remain hospitalized;
- Whereas hospital care for victims of the fire was provided at Rhode Island Hospital, Kent County Hospital, South County Hospital, Fatima Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, Miriam Hospital, Roger Williams Hospital, Landmark Hospital, University of Massachusetts/Worcester Hospital, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Westerly Hospital, Shriners Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital, Memorial Hospital, Charlton Hospital, and Newport Hospital;
- Whereas the local Red Cross, with 10 paid staff and over 400 dedicated volunteers, has played a critical role in offering comfort to the families of victims and coordinating services;
- Whereas State and local officials have responded to the fire and its aftermath quickly, effectively, and compassionately, and the people of Rhode Island and the Nation are grateful for their efforts;
- Whereas Governor Donald Carcieri of Rhode Island and West Warwick Town Manager Wolfgang Bauer have shown exceptional leadership under trying circumstances and their sensitivity to the families impacted by the tragedy is much appreciated; Lt. Governor Charles Fogarty and Maj. Gen. Reginald Centracchio, as Co-Chairs of the Emergency Management Advisory Council, have also played a crucial role in responding to the tragedy; and the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency has impressively and effectively coordinated a myriad of State and local activities;
- Whereas area funeral directors and medical examiners have provided outstanding service throughout the tragedy;
- Whereas the staff of the local family resource center has helped the families of victims to access the services and information they need and provided care and comfort to hundreds of grieving family members;
- Whereas the people of Rhode Island and concerned citizens across the United States have shown incredible generosity in response

to the tragedy, contributing hundreds of thousands of dollars to victims' assistance efforts;

Whereas many local businesses have provided victims and their families with crucial services from food to transportation, members of the Rhode Island Bar Association and Rhode Island Trial Lawyers Association have offered free assistance to victims and their families with immediate legal issues, and community mental health centers and mental health professionals have provided critical mental health care to victims and their families and other members of the community;

Whereas Federal agencies, including the Social Security Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Small Business Administration, have offered assistance and expertise that has been extremely helpful to the State's emergency response to the tragedy;

Whereas the West Warwick fire is only the most recent example of how deadly fire can be in nonresidential buildings;

Whereas, in 2001, the last year in which full statistics are available, 80 people were killed and 1,650 injured in fires in nonresidential buildings, not including the victims of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001; and

Whereas, on February 17, 2003, 21 people were killed in a tragic stampede at the E2 Nightclub in Chicago, Illinois, and this tragedy and the West Warwick fire, which have deeply impacted persons throughout the United States, emphasize the critical need for enhancements in nightclub and concert hall safety: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring),
That the Congress—

(1) expresses its deepest condolences to the family members and friends who lost loved ones as a result of the tragic fire on February 20, 2003, at The Station nightclub in West Warwick, Rhode Island, and offers its hope for the quick and full recovery of those persons who were injured in the fire;

(2) expresses immense gratitude for the efforts of countless emergency response personnel, local, State, and Federal officials, health care providers, volunteers, businesses, and citizens who have been part of the response to this tragedy; and

(3) urges State and local officials and the owners of entertainment facilities to examine their safety practices, fire codes, and enforcement capabilities in light of this horrific tragedy and to take all necessary action to ensure that such a tragedy never befalls any community again.

Agreed to March 13, 2003.