

the House the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 76) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2004, and for other purposes. The joint resolution shall be considered as read for amendment. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the joint resolution to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate on the joint resolution equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations; and (2) one motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LINDER) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 430 is a closed rule that provides for the consideration of H.J. Res. 76, a continuing resolution that will ensure further appropriations for fiscal year 2004. The rule provides for 1 hour of debate in the House, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the joint resolution and provides for one motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, we passed the first continuing resolution, H.J. Res. 69, in late September, continuing appropriations through October. The provisions of H.J. Res. 75, which was the second CR enacted by this Congress, are scheduled to expire this Friday, November 7.

Under the joint resolution that H. Res. 430 makes in order, the provisions of that second continuing resolution would be extended until November 21, 2003. In brief, for the fiscal year 2004 appropriations bills that have not yet been enacted into law, the CR provides 2 additional weeks of funding for those Federal departments and agencies whose operations depend on the enactment of those appropriations.

We are approaching the completion of this first session of the 108th Congress, but there are a number of appropriations bills and other must-do legislative priorities that we are working to resolve. Additional time is needed. Nonetheless, it is our goal to have this represent the last continuing resolution, as the appropriators are working hard to complete conference reports and are moving toward making the tough decisions that will lead us to the end of the appropriations process for this year. This continuing resolution gives us the time needed to complete this process in an orderly manner.

The Committee on Rules approved this rule yesterday. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting its passage.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, since George W. Bush got his job and Republicans took over the entire Federal Government, nearly 3 million Americans have lost their jobs. So, under these circumstances, you might think the Republicans who control the town and the government and CBS would be very conscientious about doing their jobs. But here we are, once again, passing yet another continuing resolution to keep the government running because the Republican Congress refuses to do the most fundamental job the American people have given to it. While millions of Americans cannot find any jobs, Republicans refuse to do the jobs that they have and the taxpayers pay us to do. The House has not put in a full week's worth of work in months.

So what is the problem Mr. Speaker? After all, the Republicans control this body, the other body, the Presidency. Are they stuck haggling with each other over how much to shortchange schools this year? Or looking for an excuse to continue penalizing disabled veterans? Or arguing over which slick procedural trick to use to try to hide the hundreds of billions of dollars in debt they have run up?

Well, one thing is for sure, you know this is not a Republican Party priority, because when the Republican Party wants something, the Republican Party is ruthlessly efficient.

Just take a look at the record. When it comes to Republican priorities, like tax breaks for the small, elite group of big contributors who fund Republican campaigns, this Congress has been tremendously successful. But when it comes to the priorities of the American people, like tax relief for the military and working families, this Congress cannot or will not get it done.

Mr. Speaker, Republican leaders have protected big corporate tax dodgers, but Republicans will not do anything about the high health care costs or help the millions of Americans who need unemployment insurance in the midst of President Bush's jobless recovery. They actually blocked a Democratic pay raise for the military, which would have given the soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan a \$1,500 bonus.

Mr. Speaker, I fear this is not a government of the people, by the people and for the people. It is a government of the Republican Party, by the Republican Party, and for the Republican Party.

Unfortunately, the rest of America does not seem to matter. Today, millions of hardworking Americans no longer share in the prosperity they enjoyed during the Democrat-led economic boom of the nineties. George W. Bush has compiled the worst record of job loss of any President since Herbert Hoover in the Great Depression. Some

1.4 million Americans have been unemployed for so long in this economy that they have exhausted their unemployment insurance. After the end of this year, Americans who lose their jobs, people like the nearly 3 million jobs lost since President Bush took office, will not be able to enroll in unemployment insurance.

Over that same period, the Republican fiscal irresponsibility turned record surpluses into astronomical and out-of-control deficits, increasing the debt tax on all Americans and threatening the future of Medicare and Social Security. And it is getting worse. In the coming years, the tax breaks for the wealthiest few will become even more expensive, at the same time that the Bush administration will be asking taxpayers to send untold hundreds of billions of dollars to Iraq.

This government has no plan to clean up the mess it has made of America. Instead, they just keep offering more of the same and hope the American people will not notice that their Congress has stopped working for them, because it is too busy using the power of the people's government to protect the privileges of their party.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING AND HONORING FIREFIGHTERS AND OTHER PUBLIC SERVANTS WHO RESPONDED TO 2003 CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 425) recognizing and honoring the firefighters and other public servants who responded to the October 2003, historically devastating, outbreak of wildfires in Southern California.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 425

Whereas in late October 2003, Southern California simultaneously experienced a number of devastating wildfires destroying thousands of homes, taking many lives, and burning hundreds of thousands of acres of grasslands and forests exceeding the devastation of any fires in the past century;

Whereas in the space of a few days, all of the resources of local firefighting companies were called upon to man fire lines on first one and then on many fronts;

Whereas firefighters were thrown into extraordinarily dangerous situations because of the fast-moving, fuel- and wind-driven fires;

Whereas firefighters exhibited resilience and courage in continuing to stay on the lines often in back-to-back shifts while knowing, in some instances, that their own families were in danger or that their personal homes had been lost and even giving the ultimate sacrifice of life;

Whereas those firefighters who were called initially were later assisted by skilled and courageous pilots flying water-drop flights in the most challenging wind and smoke conditions and by firefighters from throughout the State of California and neighboring States;

Whereas additional emergency personnel, such as law enforcement and medical personnel, have coordinated with local authorities and firefighters and have performed beyond the call of duty in the preservation and protection of human lives; and

Whereas members of the Armed Forces have once again met their country's call to duty, providing valuable firefighting assets and assistance to California's emergency response efforts; their actions are in keeping with the finest traditions of United States military service: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives recognizes and honors those firefighters and every public servant who participated in responding to the October 2003, historically devastating, outbreak of wildfires in Southern California and commends them for their dedicated service to the people of California.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 425.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Connecticut?

There was no objection.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 425 recognizes and honors the deserving firefighters in southern California for their response to the devastating wildfires there which have affected so many lives. The raging fires have scorched hundreds of thousands of acres and burned thousands of homes in one of the worst disasters in California history. Regrettably, 22 people have lost their lives due to the fires.

Mr. Speaker, the devastation of the blazes has been overshadowed by the vigilance and bravery of the men and women who have fought the fires non-stop over the last 2 weeks. These firefighters have endured extreme heat and dangerous smoke in saving countless lives and properties. Their incredible work will help all California citizens go back to their everyday lives once the fires are fully extinguished, and, indeed, the fires may be nearing the end. Due to the firefighters' efforts, many believe that the blazes are becoming contained and the worst is over. People are already returning home, children are going back to school and interrupted utility service is resuming.

□ 1315

These facts are a testament to the determination of the Southern California firefighters for their unyielding efforts. The firefighters have indeed

earned the thanks of a grateful House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, the President joined many of our colleagues yesterday during a visit to the ravaged area. I think the President thoughtfully summed up the situation in California during his tour when he observed, "I see human tragedy and heartache. I see the loss of a lot of material possessions. However, I see a strong spirit which exists here. I see people who are resolved to rebuild their lives. Amidst their tears they do see hope. And that is a great tribute to the people in this part of California."

Mr. Speaker, we commend the firefighters in California for their invaluable lifesaving work. The thoughts of the Members of this House are with the resilient citizens of California during this extraordinarily trying time.

I urge adoption of the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 425, introduced by the gentleman from California (Mrs. DAVIS).

Mr. Speaker, the fires raging through Southern California have killed 20 people, destroyed more than 3,400 homes, and scorched over 750,000 acres of forests. Most of the deaths and demolished homes were in San Diego County, where a 280,000-acre blaze was apparently started by a lost hunter who set a signal fire.

Every year, fires and other emergencies take thousands of lives and destroy property worth billions of dollars. Firefighters are on the front lines between the public and the devastation the fire can cause. Firefighters help protect the public interest from these dangers by rapidly responding to a variety of emergencies. Firefighting involves hazardous conditions and long, irregular hours.

Firefighters must be prepared to respond immediately to a fire or to any other emergency that arises. Because fighting fires is dangerous and complex, it requires organization and teamwork.

When fires break out in forests and parks, firefighters are brought in to suppress the blaze by using heavy equipment, hand tools, and water hoses. Forest firefighting is rigorous work. One of the most effective means of battling a blaze is to create fire lines by cutting down trees and digging out grass and all other vegetation, thereby creating bare land in the path of the fire that deprives it of fuel. Elite firefighters, called smoke jumpers, parachute from airplanes to reach otherwise inaccessible areas. This is extremely hazardous, because the crews have no way to escape if the wind shifts and causes the fire to burn towards them.

That is what firefighters do. They risk their lives for the public, and Steven Rucker was not any different. Steven Rucker died in the line of duty last

week while battling the Cedar fire near the town of Julian in San Diego County. Steven Rucker and three other firefighters were battling to save a home as part of a strike team called in to battle the immense San Diego County blaze. The four men were working to save a structure when the swirling flames overwhelmed their position.

Rucker's colleagues, Captain Doug McDonald, Engineer Shawn Kreps, and Firefighter/Paramedic Barrett Smith were injured on the lines before the group was evacuated by helicopter from the scene.

We owe the California firefighters, and all firefighters, a debt of gratitude for what they do to protect us from the devastation of fires. That gratitude should be extended when the fire is blazing and when it has dimmed.

I support this resolution, and I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 6 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS), the sponsor of this bill.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) for managing House Resolution 425, and I also want to thank and let the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), my colleague from San Diego, know how much I honor working with him on this, as well, as we honor brave firefighters with this resolution.

We all sympathize with our colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), for he was one of the victims of this devastating fire. He exemplifies the thousands of families whose homes were leveled. He celebrates the resilience of families whom we heard over and over again say, We will rebuild.

I am proud to welcome every member of the California congressional delegation as cosponsors of this bill, as well as Members from around the country, including those States which sent firefighters to help.

As I had an opportunity to visit the burned-out communities, streets, and neighborhoods of San Diego City and County, I was struck by the velocity of this fire storm. In the community of Scripps Ranch, the eucalyptus trees did not burn. The fire moved so quickly that the trees did not ignite, yet almost every home on several streets on the ground turned to ash.

As I toured in a helicopter, I was overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the 280,000 acres in San Diego that burned and the capriciousness of the fire that leveled 2,232 residences while, in some places, neighboring houses remained standing.

Yet, the mission of the firefighters was clear: saving lives first and then property. That is what they did; that is what they always do. They were joined by law enforcement, who handled the evacuation of tens of thousands of families.

This bill is just a small way to say thank you, thank you to people whose

bravery, whose courage and perseverance went so far beyond the ordinary.

Many of my colleagues have read the individual events and acts of heroism. I know I join with the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) in honoring the firefighter from her district, Steven Rucker, who volunteered to go to San Diego along with thousands of firefighters from throughout the State and the country and gave the ultimate sacrifice of his life. We remember also his colleagues who remain seriously burned from the fire that swiftly overran their position.

In addition, we have read of numerous, just numerous unnamed firefighters who performed way beyond their own safety. Responding to a 911 call, firefighters, choking from the smoke, entered a home to find an elderly woman. When they pulled her to safety, she told them that her husband was still inside the house. It took three attempts to enter the burning home to find him. He was trying to move in his walker toward safety. And then they brought him out and worked to get the couple air-lifted to a hospital.

We learned of firefighters overcome with frustration and sadness in the early-morning darkness when the fast-moving blazes prevented them from reaching secluded homes to warn the residents and to try to help them escape. Four of the residents of one community died. There were 22 fire-related deaths in Southern California, and we join in expressing our condolences to their families for their losses.

The stories, I say to my colleagues, are legion, and all San Diegans hold great appreciation for the dedication of the Julian firefighters who, with so much determination, saved the historic mining town that is home to all of our fantasies of the world's best apple pies. So dedicated were they that many of them lost their own homes on the neighboring hillsides while protecting the village. I talked to a firefighter who saved many homes, only to learn that his own home was taken by the firestorm.

The simultaneous fires throughout Southern California put extreme stress, not only on the resources that we are all committed to share in mutual response, but in overwhelming all of those resources. The coordination of so many agencies and equipment was indeed a critical, critical effort.

We thank, in particular, the firefighters from Northern California, the central valley, and neighboring States. I saw fire trucks lined up not only from Novato and Milpitas, but also from Fresno and Sacramento, from Arizona and Nevada, all different colors of firefighting equipment. It was impressive, and we knew of their efforts.

We are proud of our servicemen and women who are at the ready to offer their support and to supply backup resources to meet this implacable foe.

There is another whole story of neighbors helping neighbors, strangers helping the tens of thousands of evac-

uees, and the dominant spirit of victims who have committed their will to rebuild.

There will be many, many days to contemplate the lessons from this tragedy and many will be focusing on lessons learned. San Diego has learned much about the preparation, coordination, and effort needed to be prepared to respond to seasonal fires, as well as homeland security threats. We will have much to offer, I believe, our country in that search for answers.

But today, we have one very simple message: from the bottom of our hearts, we thank each and every one of you, the firefighters.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her introduction of this legislation, and I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS).

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, we always seem to find the words to express our gratitude for heroes, and today I rise in strong support for H.R. 425, a resolution to recognize those heroes, honor the brave men and women who responded to the horrendous wildfires that plagued Southern California last month.

While we all recognize that hundreds of first responders from the State of California bravely risked their lives to fight these wildfires, many Americans were less aware that hundreds of Nevada's first responders were also enlisted in this fight. In fact, during the course of this deadly natural disaster, the State of Nevada deployed over 450 brave Americans to Southern California to join our neighbors in this effort to quell this deadly natural disaster. These Nevadans included dozens of firefighters, paramedics, and highly skilled mechanics.

Northern Nevada-based crews from the United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, along with engine crews from the Nevada Division of Forestry, Reno, Sparks, Storey County, Elko County, and North Lake Fire Protection District, were dispatched on October 27 to fight the Southern California fires. Two strike teams composed of firefighters from Las Vegas, Clark County, Henderson, Pahrump, the Nevada Test Site and the Naval Air Station at Fallon drove by personal car to offer their support to a base camp in Santee.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution. The brave first responders from all over the western States and Nevada have earned this honor, and I am pleased to recognize their selfless efforts today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the sensitive Democratic leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI).

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time and my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY), for allowing me to speak out of turn here.

I want to commend my colleagues from California, (Chairman HUNTER) and (Mrs. DAVIS), for bringing this resolution to the floor, enabling Members of Congress to express our appreciation for the brave service of the firefighters in our great State of California. These firefighters battled 17 wildfires over the course of more than a week, saving countless lives and protecting us in this great natural disaster. I want to join with my California colleagues in offering my praise, respect, and admiration for the heroic men and women who put their lives at risk under extremely hazardous conditions to contain this disaster and minimize the damage to land, homes, and businesses in Southern California.

During our debate last week on another piece of legislation, I conveyed my condolences to all of our colleagues who had lost lives and families who had lost their homes in Southern California. I especially wanted to express concern to our distinguished chairman, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), for the loss of his home in the fire, and hope that his family will be made whole, as well as all of the families of the region affected.

The tales of these firefighters, Mr. Speaker, are tales of bravery and sacrifice. We mourn the loss of the gentlewoman from California's (Ms. WOOLSEY) constituent, Marin County firefighter Steven Rucker, who made the ultimate sacrifice. We all extend our sympathy to his family at home and his friends at the firehouse.

□ 1330

In San Diego County, represented by my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS), who I acknowledged earlier for her leadership, as well as by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM) and others, a number of volunteer firefighters have sacrificed their own homes while battling the blazes to preserve the homes of others in their communities.

I would also like to commend the efforts of the 72 members of the San Francisco Fire Department who were quick to join the strike teams to assist our neighbors to the south. These devastating fires have burned almost 750,000 acres, caused the death of 22 of our fellow Californians, and destroyed more than 3,500 homes. It is almost inconceivable.

As we prepare to help families and communities recover from devastation and loss, we recognize without the tireless and heroic efforts of thousands of firefighters, our losses could have been much greater. We salute their bravery, their heroism, and the decisions they make every day to risk their own safety even to protect the safety of others. I might add we commend and salute their families, their courageous families.

I commend my colleagues, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) and the gentleman from California (Mr.

HUNTER). I also want to, once again, acknowledge the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) who has so sensitively dealt with the loss of her constituent Steven Rucker. And we all acknowledge the debt we owe to California's bravest for their successful efforts to contain these massive fires.

Mr. Speaker, I again thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) for his leadership and for yielding time.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON).

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) for yielding the time. I want to thank the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) and the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) for their support and their bringing this legislation before us, as has already been mentioned.

The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) lost his home. I know he has been handling it a whole lot better than I would.

I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to express my heartfelt support for this bill, House Resolution 425, which honors the courageous firefighters and other emergency service persons who so tirelessly fought the devastating wildfires of southern California.

Over the past couple of weeks, more than 14,000 firefighters from five States have taken to the front lines in this wildfire, selflessly risking their lives for the protection of their fellow Americans. These ongoing fires have ravaged almost 750,000 acres, destroyed over 3,500 homes, and resulted in the loss of 22 lives, including the life of a young firefighter by the same of Steven L. Rucker, an engineer from the Novato Fire District.

On October 29, 2003, Engineer Rucker made the ultimate sacrifice for his fellow man while defending a home in the Cedar Fire incident in San Diego County. It is the bravery of Firefighter Rucker and other heroes like him in the Los Angeles County Fire Department who saved my district and the lives and property of my neighbors, friends, and families in the Stevenson Ranch and Sunset Point areas of the Santa Clarita Valley, where the fire literally came within feet of their homes.

My community was spared from major devastation as a result of the efforts of our firefighters from the Nation, from the county and from the areas surrounding, as well as the efforts of the Armed Services and other emergency personnel who came to the rescue.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents from the 25th District of California, I express my deep gratitude to our firefighters for their continued bravery and valor in fighting this wildfire and urge my colleagues to unanimously adopt this resolution.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) for organizing today's effort. And I rise to support H. Res. 425 and to honor the memory of firefighter Steve Rucker, a resident of Novato, California, and to wish the speedy recovery of three other Novato firefighters, Captain Doug McDonald, Shawn Kreps, and Barrett Smith. These four men were among the dozens of firefighters from my district who sped to southern California to fight the recent fires, fires that burned hundreds of thousands of acres.

The day before yesterday, I stood alongside Steve's colleagues, firefighters, and police officers and watched the mile-long precession that carried his casket from the airport in Santa Rosa to his beloved city of Novato. My heart was filled with emotion as I watched the great sadness this community felt, the sadness and the grief that come with the death from within the family. But lingering in this grief, there was also pride, pride in recalling the time and heroism of one of their own, these four firefighters served the Novato Fire Protection District.

Novato is a prosperous place, a family town that touches San Francisco Bay and reaches into the golden coastal hills. But the warm sun of Indian summer never lulls Novato firefighters. They know that the days before the rains come are the most dangerous times of the year. They also know that firefighters throughout the State are members of a large community and when help is needed anywhere, they are honored to help.

So it was with that and without any contractual obligation but out of compassion and comradeship that Shawn Kreps drove Novato fire engine 6162 all night a week ago Monday to join the fire lines at the Cedar fire, more than 400 miles from Novato. And so it was that Steve Rucker, Doug McDonald, Shawn Kreps, and Barrett Smith found themselves Wednesday on a back road, 5 miles from the rural village of Julian, fighting to protect a scattering of homes.

Fire can be a fierce and swift enemy, and when flames suddenly threatened to engulf the men, all they could do is run for their lives. Steve Rucker did not make it. Apparently the intense heat of the fire seared his lungs. And when Captain McDonald went out to look for his friend, he was critically burned. Fortunately, Kreps and Smith suffered minor injuries, and I expect they will have many fires to fight in the future. Captain McDonald, however, remains hospitalized with serious burns, the wounds of a hero, and my prayers go out to him and his family.

It was too soon for 38-year-old Steve Rucker to leave this earth. He left behind a loving wife, Cathy, a 7-year-old daughter Kerstin, and a 3-year-old son Wesley, in a home he had just built. His friends in the department knew Steve as "The Ruckster," a cheerful,

enthusiastic man ready to joke, ready to laugh, a man they could counted on to be a calm and competent firefighter and paramedic. A man who loved his job. He was, according to his friends and colleagues, a firefighter's firefighter.

In fact, they told me just the other day that Steve was the "go-to guy" during times of tragedy like now, and that his loss was felt even greater because they really needed him to help them get through their pain. Twelve thousand firefighters battled the flames that threatened to burn from southern California to the Pacific Ocean. Steve Rucker was the only firefighter to die in this historical battle. In this, he receives a measure of immortality. He also stands for all of those brave men and women who unselfishly risked their lives to save others, whether facing a wall of flames on a rural back road or the billowing smoke of the World Trade Center.

Mr. Speaker, Steve Rucker was an irreplaceable man, but his family must go on without him. I wish them consolation in knowing that this man, son, husband, father, died giving the gift of himself.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER).

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time, and I want to thank my colleagues for cosponsoring this resolution and for the initiative of the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) on this resolution.

And, Mr. Speaker, I thought I would lead off simply by reading the names of the people who lost their lives in this fire. Steven Rucker, Galen Blackledge, Christy-Anne Seiler Davis, Edward Downs, Nancy Morphew, Mary Peace, Asleigh Roach, Stephen Shacklett, James Shohara, Solange Shohara, Randy Shohara, Robin Sloan, Jennifer Sloan, Ralph Westy, Charles Cunningham, James McDermith, Chad Williams, Gene Knowles. And there are some other names which have not yet been released, and we will recount them when they are released.

Mr. Speaker, this was a time of enormous disaster and tragedy for our colleagues and for our neighbors and friends who lived in our communities who have lost so much, some who have lost their lives. It is also a time of great heroism. And I was reminded as the stories came in of the firefighters and the valiant stands that they were making as they were trying to keep these fires from advancing into our neighborhoods. I was reminded that all the heroism that is displayed by uniformed services in this country are not just being displayed on the battlefields of the Middle East, but rather in these battles that we undertake in the West, especially all over the country, but for some reason during this season in the West and those Santa Ana winds come up, those battles are to protect our communities against fire.

□ 1345

And it was very moving to be out yesterday and the day before when we carried the body of Steve Rucker, who was the Novato firefighter who has been so eloquently described by my colleagues, when we carried his body to the C-130 to take him home. And I rode in the procession with Maureen McDonald, who is the wife of Doug McDonald, who was Steven's partner, who also was caught by this fire, and who was burned over 30 percent of his body and is currently doing well in San Diego in the hospital.

And I was taken by the great bravery and the eloquence of this lady, this Maureen McDonald whose own husband was in very difficult condition, but who was focusing all of her attention on the Rucker family. When I asked her to talk a little bit about how she had gotten to know the Ruckers, she said something that will always stick with me: She said, "I met them in the glow of the birth of their first child." So she had met them right after they had that first baby, and that was Kerstin, who now is some 7 years old, Wesley is now 2. But for me that personalized this fire.

And this country enjoys not only great freedoms, but a wonderful, wonderful way of life. I mean, every part of this country has great charm, but for us in California, most of us can go to the ocean fairly easily, fairly quickly, one can go to the desert within a couple miles from almost any part of southern California, one can go to the mountains, those great, beautiful mountains. You can raise your family in these wonderful, wonderful surroundings. And yet we have some dangers and some tragedies that we are protected from by those people that wear the uniform of the various firefighting units and communities.

And I noticed as Steve Rucker's body was being carried to the C-130 that that community is one community as they all lined up. It was indeed seamless. There were not individual areas or districts represented. They were all firefighters. They were all people who gave so much so that we might have this great wonderful life that we enjoy in California and other places.

So, Mr. Speaker, I saw the coming together of the firefighters, all these units they came in to honor Steve Rucker. And also it was good to see the President come out with the outgoing Governor of California, Gray Davis, stand side by side with him and the incoming Governor, Mr. Schwarzenegger, and to see them all together after some heavy duty political arm wrestling to all unite in common cause. And the common cause was to thank the people that wear firefighting uniforms.

I think that the language of the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) in this resolution very eloquently expresses that, and, certainly, I want to thank her and everyone who participated in putting this resolution together.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD).

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time. I would like to thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS), and also the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), for bringing forth this resolution that is just so timely. To my colleague and friend who just spoke, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), our best regards to him because we know that his district was extremely devastated, including the loss of his home; and we are with him on whatever he needs us to be with him on.

I rise today, Mr. Speaker, in support of H. Res. 425. As a Representative from Southern California and a resident of Los Angeles County, I want to thank those brave men and women who are firefighters and public servants who have worked so hard to put out those fires that have devastated Southern California. They are truly our heroes. We thank them so much.

As I stand here today, our firefighters continue to make excellent progress towards containing four major fires involving over 271,000 acres of State, Federal, and private lands. Three of these fires involve national forest lands. Six other fires totaling an additional 473,778 acres have been contained. Three more fires are expected to be fully contained by the end of the week.

The devastation of these wild fires in Southern California is unprecedented, Mr. Speaker. To date, the Forest Service wild fire cost is \$45 million. The total cost of wild fires is \$92 million, which represents all fires both contained and active.

I look forward to working with Congress and with the administration, and we thank the President for being out there this week to look at the devastation and to continue to provide more emergency relief to California in the near future. We will work together to get our State, our region, and our citizens back on their feet.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM).

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, this body should be proud. The California delegation, Republicans, Democrats, united. There were no party lines. There were no district lines in California. Members whose districts were not even affected called to help and offered concern.

The day before yesterday, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS), the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA), and myself went through 10 town hall meetings with FEMA, Red Cross, SPA and other government agencies. We witnessed in some cases firefighters who had fought

fires, saving other people's homes while their own homes burned down.

I witnessed people at each of these emergency centers that had actually lost their homes, and they were volunteering at those centers to help other people that had lost their homes and things. The events of 9-11 showed that people do come together, and it did so in the State of California also.

In Lake Wolford we saw the sight of a young girl, her brother was driving a car, overcome by smoke, crashed the car and she died a horrible death in front of the firefighters that could not get to her to save her life.

We honor our firefighters. We lost 23 firefighters in 2003. We lost a firefighter, Steven Rucker, in this fight. Captain Doug McDonald its fighting for his life with over 18 percent of his body burned.

If you really want to help our firefighters, if you really want to pay them homage, there are some things we can do. We are putting in the defense bill that there are strange laws where Federal tankers cannot get airborne. They could be there fully loaded with water and chemicals, and they cannot touch the fire if State and local funds have not maxed out. We are changing that, and we are asking for this body's help to do that.

Firefighters for years have asked for us to put more roads in our forests, not just to have access to the fire, but so that they can get out. We lost 15 firefighters in Colorado because they could not get out of the fire. They did not have a road to come through. But yet we have been stopped from doing that by some people in this body and the other body.

The bark beetle, we asked to be able to cut the dead wood and the trees, and not to cut just the dead wood but to cut wherever the bark beetles are. And that same group stopped us from doing that. In Julian, we lost most of Julian because of bark beetle trees and the fuel. The firefighters could not get to it.

We also have for a decade been wanting to take care and thin brush out. For a decade. We have dead brush piled on dead brush every year, and we want to thin it; but we cannot do it because of a bird called a gnat catcher and the desert tortoise and those things. Well, I ask this body, how many of the endangered species do we have today? They are all burned up.

Can you imagine what the winter rains are going to do with the mud and erosion in our lakes and streams? Those who stopped us from doing that are responsible for the aftermath that we are going through right now.

So we can make those changes, ladies and gentlemen. Honor the firefighters and give them what they need.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, there is no greater gift that one can give than his or her own life. There is no greater service than

one can provide than looking after the needs of others while neglecting those of your own. I urge passage of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA).

(Mr. Issa asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, my colleague who just spoke, the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM), spoke from the heart and from years of experience in this body. In Congress talk is cheap.

This resolution splendidly lays out our feelings as a body for the brave and courageous acts of firefighters during this statewide fire emergency. As the firestorms spread throughout California at a rate never before seen, we became acutely aware of just how much we depend on the brave men and women who come from all over the country to fight our wild fires. But here today as we speak in such kind words of Steven Rucker, and we talk about his important contribution and we talk about the loss of 22 innocent people, it is certainly my profound wish and my dedication here that they not die in vain. And although these losses of life seem senseless today, they will be even more senseless if a year from now we have more wild fires with more build-up of fuel that could have been cleared away if the President's Healthy Forest Initiative which has now been passed by both of our bodies does not, in fact, become law.

If we talk profoundly and then our actions are hollow, then talk is cheap. So I ask this body here today in the passing of this resolution, a very appropriate one, to cast your vote not just for this resolution but to have this resolution have meaning a year from now. A year from now someone probably will die, but if fewer die because we acted between now and then to streamline firefighting, yes, to facilitate the dollars necessary to clear underbrush and fuel that has been building up but also to work on the core cause of that fuel building up, the fact that America has not managed its forests properly, the President laid down a marker asking us to produce a bill to manage forests, we have done so. Once conferenced and becoming law, we would begin the process of giving meaning to these firefighters' selfless acts by ensuring that in years to come there will be for the first time in a generation fewer wild fires rather than more.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 425, recognizing and honoring the firefighters and public servants who responded to the October, 2003 wildfires in California.

The fires of the past 2 weeks have ravaged the southern California landscape, consuming over 746,000 acres and destroying 3,587 homes. The fires have also claimed the lives of at least 22 in San Diego County. The sense

of loss and devastation that is felt by many of my constituents and other residents of southern California cannot be overstated. The scope of these fires, in terms of lives lost and property damaged, was beyond comparison to anything we have experienced in recent memory. These events were truly a catastrophe, and we mourn with those who have suffered loss.

But I also want to take this opportunity to honor the thousands of men and women who put themselves in harm's way to fight the fires and provide emergency humanitarian assistance to people in need. Over 14,000 firefighters from five different states participated in the firefighting effort. This was particularly dangerous duty, with firefighters confronting quickly-moving wind-driven blazes. Firefighters exhibited resilience and courage, often working back-to-back shifts on the front lines while knowing that, in some cases, their own homes were threatened.

I am particularly proud of the incredible effort made by firefighters to save the town of Julian in my district. Early last week, the Cedar Fire, which eventually destroyed nearly 300,000 acres and more than 2,200 homes, was burning a direct path toward Julian. It looked like the town would be completely destroyed. Through an incredibly heroic effort, firefighters were able to save the town and the lives of dozens of people who were trapped by the fires.

One of these firefighters was Steven Rucker of Marin County. He was battling a part of the Cedar Fire that was dangerously approaching the outskirts of Julian, when his crew was entrapped by a wind-driven blaze. The fire moved so quickly they were not able to reach their engine before becoming engulfed in the flames. Three of his colleagues, Captain Doug McDonald, Shawn Kreps, and Barret Smith were seriously injured in the incident. These men will be remembered as heroes. Their resolve, in the face of extreme danger, is a testament to the fine men and women we have serving us in fire departments throughout California and its neighboring states.

I also want to honor the thousands of men and women who have assisted with the relief and support effort these past 2 weeks. Private non-profit charities, public emergency organizations like the Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, local and state law enforcement agencies, emergency medical teams, as well as thousands of community volunteers have all extended themselves to bring critical relief to those who were in the greatest need. These efforts saved lives and brought comfort to those who had lost property. We would be in a much more difficult situation without them.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a co-sponsor of H. Res. 425, which honors the brave men and women who stood in the face of danger and saved the lives and property of so many. We owe these heroes a debt of gratitude. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, how much time remains?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). The gentleman from Connecticut has 4 minutes remaining.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS).

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

My colleague, the gentlewoman from San Diego, California (Mrs. DAVIS), I appreciate her helping with this very important recognition of a group of our citizens that have given everything we could ask in order to protect our community.

Many do not know that my district, which includes the San Bernardino National Forest, was as dramatically impacted by this fire as any in the country or any in California. The San Bernardino National Forest has been in desperate condition for some time, in no small part because of serious management problems we have experienced in recent years; also in no small part because of a series of years of serious drought that has allowed the ever-present bark beetle to kind of have its way with our forests. And presently there are literally millions of trees standing tall, but which are dead.

It looks like fall time here in the East, but in our forests it is not fall at all. Instead the trees are yellow because they have died. Indeed, we cannot control that piece of nature; but on Saturday I had the occasion to travel with the Under Secretary who is responsible for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. He is the Under Secretary with homeland defense responsibilities.

As we flew over the forest, there were two things that were very obvious to both of us. The first was that where fire has effectively taken place, the erosion that is bound to take place as soon as the rains start to fall will be a tremendous challenge—to see the Earth move as a result of those rainfalls in the future. It is going to have a huge effect upon our ability to rebuild the forest. But the other factor that was a stark reality was that at least three-quarters of those trees we were so worried about which were standing dead are still standing. Many of those trees were not caught up in the fire, and they are indeed a fire looking for somewhere in the future to happen.

Both the Under Secretary and I immediately saw the challenges that lie before us. Indeed, I would like to spend just a moment expressing my deep appreciation for a community that was ready, for they saw on the horizon this huge challenge that was facing the San Bernardino National Forest.

The firefighters, the law enforcement officers, citizens from the community for months came together learning more and more about the challenge that lay ahead. The Lord gave us a fire about 6 weeks before this big one, and that fire caused us to recognize that it could really happen. In that case, we actually had some 600 people leave their homes in order to protect their own lives. Very quickly it became obvious that real fire, of a nature that we had not seen for perhaps 20 years, was about to take place. And so our people got ready.

Community leaders in every city and town throughout the mountains recognized that we were in this together and

their preparations saved many a life. There is little doubt that the combination of our firefighters, law enforcement officers, and those citizens themselves made all the difference. We are grateful for their recognizing this crisis and being ready to respond.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LEWIS of California. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman and majority leaders on both sides. I stand in support of this resolution, H. Res. 425.

□ 1400

I went out there with the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS), and we saw many of the firefighters who were willing to stand up and fight for us. We saw the devastation in our immediate area, but one really cannot explain what happens when a person is willing to go on the battle line.

Many of these men and women were willing to fight for us, when all of us are willing to witness what happens right now, and we saw the fires that are going on, but these men and women continued to go back into the battle because they knew what it meant to save that particular home or save that forest or save our immediate areas in terms of our communities.

I know that my son, Joe Baca, Jr., and I and the highway patrol went directly into the fires and saw some of these homes that were burning, and we saw the firefighters that were willing to fight the fight. They did not ask any questions, but these men and women continued to be brave and continued to work on behalf of us.

I stand in support of this resolution. I commend both sides for coming up and honoring these men and women who are heroes and continue to fight in our behalf, and we need to continue to support individuals that are willing to stand on the line for us.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H. Res. 425, a resolution honoring and commemorating the heroic efforts of the firefighters who fought to save lives and property. These firefighters exhibited resilience and courage, continuing to stay on the lines, often in back-to-back shifts and, in some instances, knowing that their own families were in danger or that their personal homes had been lost.

The fires that swept across Southern California tested our resolve. All of us in the fire's path were forced to wrestle with the magnitude of the destructive force bearing down on our neighborhoods. Clearly, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the brave firefighters who met this huge obstacle head on, and I think all of us were impressed by the outpouring of compassion in our communities as neighbors helped neighbors, and strangers came to the aid of those they had never met.

I have made a commitment to my constituents to fight for our neighbors as we begin the difficult process of rebuilding. I will be a vocal advocate in Washington for the necessary federal assistance being made available so our neighbors can begin to put their lives back together. Just yesterday, I took part in meetings

with the President of the United States when he visited San Diego to tour the fire damage, telling him that our people need all the resources of the federal government marshaled for their support over the upcoming weeks and months. There will be questions that need to be answered about what preparations were made to combat a fire of this magnitude in our region, and I will not pull punches in getting to the bottom of any culpability that could have hampered our ability to stop this fire.

In addition to co-sponsoring this important legislation, I have co-sponsored two other important fire related bills. H.R. 3407, the California FIRE Act, to provide \$500 million in immediate disaster relief to the victims of the California fires, and H.R. 3431, the Firefighters Medical Monitoring Act, to keep track of the health of the California firefighters after the fires are extinguished. We must ensure that the firefighters who put their lives at risk do not become ill following the fires. I recently voted in favor of the Supplemental Appropriations bill because of the terrible suffering and devastation endured by the citizens of San Diego County as a result of the firestorm, \$500 million was added for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster assistance in California. Last week, I contacted FEMA Director Michael Brown and President Bush, urging them to make a FEMA center operational immediately in San Diego, to help my constituents in processing the necessary paperwork to begin the process of rebuilding their lives. This important funding will allow FEMA to open one-stop clearinghouses for information and assistance in expediting the huge volume of disaster claims that will result from this tragedy.

I know, in a very personal way, the suffering of San Diegans in the recent firestorm and because I want to say "thank you" to the thousands of professional firefighters who exhibited so much bravery and courage in recent days, I support this important bill.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support for House Resolution 425, which recognizes and honors the firefighters and other public servants who responded to the devastating wildfires in Southern California which began last month. I commend Congressman DUNCAN HUNTER and Congresswoman SUSAN DAVIS for their work on recognizing these heroic efforts.

More than 14,000 firefighters from five different states were called upon to fight these fires. Those on the fire lines continue to make excellent progress toward full containment, which in the course of the past three weeks, consumed over 745,000 acres, destroyed over 3,500 homes, and took the lives of twenty-two individuals.

Among those lives lost was firefighter Steven L. Rucker, who died in the line of duty on Wednesday, October 29, 2003, battling the Cedar Fire in San Diego County. Steve, just 38 years old, was an 11 year veteran of Novato Fire District. He is survived by his wife and two children. This tragic loss, as well as the hard battle the firefighters are still engaged in, is why we come to the House Floor today.

It is devastating to hear the numbers of people lost, homes gone, and communities that are faced with rebuilding. However, by far greater numbers are the people saved, homes protected, and communities sheltered by the tireless efforts of firefighters. I also want to take this time to recognize all the volunteers

who are working at the various shelters, many of whom lost their own homes in these fires.

And while we still look forward to full containment of the fires that have burned in five counties in Southern California, we are already working toward rebuilding, mitigating for potential mudslides and erosion during the rainy season, and looking at every opportunity to prevent another disaster of this magnitude. The firefighters are aided in this by support from a number of federal agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Small Business Administration, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

We are resolved, in remembering Steve Rucker and the other fire victims, as well as in sharing the devastation with those who lost their homes and businesses, to do all we can to ensure the expedited delivery of federal disaster assistance dollars, to coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies to assist in the recovery effort, and most importantly, to engage in preventing further damage from potentially damaging winter storms.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution today.

Mrs. BONO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 425, a bill recognizing and honoring the firefighters and other public servants who responded to the October 2003, historically devastating, outbreak of wildfires in Southern California.

Whether it be the tragic day of September 11, 2001 or a single structure fire in town, it is the brave firefighter who rushes in when others rush out. It is only fitting then, that we take time to honor these brave men and women who took on the flames that wrecked so much damage in Southern California.

The 45th Congressional District lost twenty-one homes. But I believe if it were not for the valiant efforts of those individuals who risked their lives to battle this blaze, the devastation could have been even worse.

Sadly, we lost Steve Rucker, a 38-year-old fire engineer from the Novato Fire Protection District near San Francisco. Steve, a husband and father, stood up to this fire while hundreds of miles away from his home. The amazing thing is that Steve, and the thousands of other firefighters, fought these flames as if they were threatening their own homes and families. It was a battle fought as much with the heart as anything else.

It certainly takes a special kind of spirit to serve as a firefighter. I know many of these individuals knew this was their calling from the earliest of ages—probably after seeing a bright red fire truck make its way down the street. But from those childhood dreams grew the reality that this job was fraught with danger. Yet still, these men and women pursue with vigor the job that captivated them so many years ago. They work so very hard at protecting us and our homes.

I am also grateful to those in the Red Cross and hundreds of other volunteers who spent their time and efforts comforting the victims of this disaster. I cannot imagine what it is like to lose one's home, but how much more tragic would it have been to have nowhere to go and no one to help. But at this time, strangers turned into family and all that is good about human spirit rose above this disaster.

Californians are full of courage and do not weaken in the face of adversity. The will to rebuild took root even in the darkest of hours. But if not for our firefighters and volunteers, keeping such faith would have been much more difficult.

On behalf of the constituents of the 45th Congressional District of California, I want to thank these individuals for their tireless efforts and extreme bravery during our time of need.

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to each and every firefighter and citizen whose dedication to our communities and families of Southern California again demonstrated exceptional spirit and strength in a time of disaster. Our nation is fortunate to have dedicated citizens who willingly and unselfishly give their time and talent and make their communities a better place to live and work. Our firefighters confronted the unprecedented fires which swept through our region with unwavering courage. They exemplify community leadership. I was fortunate enough to accompany President Bush yesterday as he thanked these spirited public servants and talked to the victims and survivors of the Southern California fires.

Without the dedication and tireless passion of our Firefighters and public servants there would have been even more extensive destruction of property and devastation of lives above and beyond the 3,300 homes and 4,000 other structures destroyed and hundreds of thousands of acres burned. Our Firefighters fought and finally brought under control these devastating wildfires and continue in aiding the victims left homeless in the wake of the destruction.

I know I speak for all the people from California's 44th district when I say that our thoughts and prayers have been with the firefighters as they worked vigorously to contain and control the wildfires. Laboring day and night in extreme conditions, the firefighters that responded to the Southern California wildfires will always have our nation's respect for their dedication to their profession. There is no better example for Americans than those who stare down adversity and meet every challenge with true conviction, just as the firefighters have done during this very difficult time.

While the firefighter worked tirelessly on the front lines of the fires, the support personnel that were tasked with an overwhelming job of reconstruction and recovery are equally honored for their efforts. Often it is the aftermath of a crisis that brings the most arduous challenges. The dedicated public servants that have come to the aid of their victims of the Southern California wildfires are to be commended for their ongoing contributions. Law enforcement, medical personnel, emergency responders, and community leaders have all come together to complete a daunting task; recovering from the loss of loved ones and property, and rebuilding in the aftermath.

I am proud to cosponsor H. Res. 425, recognizing and honoring the firefighters and public servants who responded to the October 2003 Southern California wildfires. I am sincerely grateful for the leadership and sacrifice firefighters and their families endure in order to secure property and protect our lives. As a native Southern Californian I know that our communities will persevere through this tragedy and successfully rebuild our beloved homes and families. We all stand ready to help in any way I can.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support House Resolution 425 honoring the heroic efforts of the firefighters and safety personnel who responded so bravely to the devastating outbreak of wildfires in Southern California.

At the peak of the blazes, more than 14,000 firefighters from across California and several other Western states were deployed over hundreds of miles in an arc around Los Angeles and into San Diego County as far south as the Mexican border.

These courageous men and women have gone far beyond the call of duty. Fighting fires that took the lives of 20 people, destroyed more than 3,400 homes and scorched more than 750,000 acres since igniting in different locations around Southern California nearly two weeks ago, they worked around the clock, despite considerable risk to their personal safety, in order to ensure the well-being of the nearly 100,000 evacuated residents.

And as the evacuated sought safety and shelter, the American Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and a number of similar organizations mobilized hundreds of volunteers to assist in providing clothes, food and other essential items to the many who were forced to abandon all of their possessions. As the rebuilding process begins, these same agencies and organizations will serve as a helping hand to too many Southern California residents whose homes have been either badly damaged or lost.

I would like to pay special recognition to the firefighters in my California District who were called upon to fight these blazes. Coordinated by the Glendale Fire Department, firefighters from my District were called to battle one of the very earliest blazes and for two weeks after the first blaze, devoted almost every resource in the District to assisting in the effort to knock down these fires. I have no doubt that their heroic actions saved thousands of lives.

This is a devastating time for Southern California residents. I send my deepest condolences to the families who have lost loved ones and to the thousands who have lost homes to these fires. It is only then appropriate that through the passage of House Resolution 425 we honor the actions of the firefighters and safety personnel who prevented the additional loss of life and property. I urge all Members to support this resolution and pay respect to some of our Nation's bravest heroes.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 425 honoring those who fought the devastating fires that have struck Southern California. In particular, I want to mention Steven Rucker, 38 years old and the father of two young children, who died fighting the Cedar fire, which began on the Cleveland National Forest and moved over 25 miles in less than 10 hours. He joins the roll of 29 other wildland firefighters who perished this summer across this country. Every wildland firefighter who takes up this occupation knows that on the next fire, they could face a similar fate.

Brave men and women choose the profession of firefighting with a keen awareness of the dangers inherent in the job. What they do requires bravery similar to that required of our armed forces. However, they fight a foe that isn't driven by ideology, or religion, or a lust for power. Wildfire has none of these motiva-

tions, and is something altogether more unpredictable as a result. If not for the efforts of our firefighters, many more homes and businesses, not just in California but across the country, would be lost, and many more civilians would have lost their very lives.

House Resolution 425 focuses on the Southern California fires, which are fresh in our memories. However, I think it's important that we recognize that wildland firefighters face these dangers in many states across the country. Wildland firefighters have died on the fire ground in States as diverse as Florida, Arkansas, Indiana, Montana, New York, Wisconsin, Texas, Louisiana, and Oregon over the last ten years. Moreover, when wildfires strike anywhere in the United States, wildland firefighters from across the country—Federal, state, and local—mobilize to defend our forests, our homes, our families, from the devastation brought about by catastrophic fire.

The firefighters who bravely face these infernos also understand something that many here in Washington are just beginning to grasp; that these wildfires are getting worse because we've tied the hands of our Federal land managers and prevented them from addressing hazardous fuel buildups. We have a bill that begins to address this issue, and I hope we can work with the other body to finish that important work soon.

I am saddened by the loss of life and the destruction of our resources that we witnessed in the last weeks. I am humbled by the bravery of our wildland firefighters and the tenacity of all our first responders without whom the disaster in California would have been far worse. I am honored to join my colleagues whose constituents have suffered so much in recent weeks in passing this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). All time has expired.

The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 425.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 1904. An act to improve the capacity of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to plan and conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands and Bureau of Land Management lands aimed at protecting communities, watersheds, and certain other at-risk lands from catastrophic wildfire, to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape, and for other purposes.