

the basement of the same Marshall Post Office.

I ask my colleagues to join me in support of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG).

Mr. WALBERG. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in support of naming the Marshall, Michigan Post Office, a prominent post office in my district, the Seventh District of Michigan, the Michael W. Schragg Post Office.

Michael's life story has been recounted to some degree by my colleagues thus far, but he is one that is beloved in his community, family, and the American postal service. Michael served as Marshall's postmaster for 23 years and was the force behind the creation of the Marshall Postal Museum, the second largest postal museum in the United States, behind only the Smithsonian, as has been represented thus far.

Michael was born in Calhoun County and raised on the family farm in Ceresco, Michigan. He attended a one-room country school, the Francisco School in Ceresco, through the seventh grade, and he then went on to graduate from Marshall High School. Michael met his wife, Loretta, while working at the Robinson's department store as he attended Kellogg Community College.

Michael enlisted in the U.S. Army Post Office in June 1967 and served in Germany for 3 years. Michael and Loretta went on to have three children, two of whom embarked on postal careers of their own.

Michael started his postal career in Marshall, Michigan, as a substitute clerk carrier and quickly earned a promotion to supervisor. The following year he became the postmaster for Olivet, Michigan, only to return to Marshall, serving as the town's postmaster for 23 years. During his tenure in Marshall, the U.S. Postal Service named the Marshall Post Office an All-American Post Office.

Michael Schragg has been active in the Marshall community throughout his lifetime. He is a past president of the Marshall Rotary Club and continues to serve on the Marshall Historical Society. Michael's most noteworthy accomplishment is the creation of the Marshall Postal Museum. It is second only to the Smithsonian Postal Museum in size and is housed in the basement of the historic Marshall Post Office.

The Marshall Post Office building, a Greek revival architectural style with copper roof, was constructed in 1932 out of Marshall sandstone. The idea for the downstairs museum occurred during Marshall's 1987 Historic Home Tour. At that time Postmaster Schragg displayed a number of old postal artifacts throughout the building, which was on the historic tour that year. Many people thought the entire post office was a museum rather than an official work-

ing U.S. Post Office. After the tour Michael began organizing the collection of postal antiques in seven rooms in the basement and in an annex building behind the post office.

The Marshall Postal Museum has since become one of the cornerstones of the annual Marshall Historic Home Tour. It was part of a New York Times article about places in America worth visiting, and Michael and the museum have also been featured in Michigan Magazine.

Michael has taken some of the museum's displays on the road and, as has been mentioned, toured numerous States. Michael drove a vintage 1931 Model A mail delivery truck in President George W. Bush's first inaugural parade in Washington, DC.

Because of Michael's countless hours of work on the Marshall Postal Museum, his years of service to the United States Postal Service in Michigan, and his dedication to the Marshall community, naming the Marshall Post Office in his honor is a fitting tribute, and I urge the House to join me in support of H.R. 3446.

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

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to fully support H.R. 3446. I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3446.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

HONORING THE FIRST RESPONDERS AND SUPPORTING THE VICTIMS OF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 778) honoring the first responders and supporting the victims of the Southern California wildfires.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 778

Whereas beginning on October 21, 2007, Southern California experienced a number of devastating wildfires destroying over five-hundred-thousand acres—the largest in the history of California—and over fourteen-hundred homes and countless other properties;

Whereas high temperatures and erratic winds caused the multiple fires to rapidly progress in the counties of Ventura, Los An-

geles, Orange, Riverside, Santa Barbara, San Bernardino, and San Diego;

Whereas loss of life and serious injuries have resulted from the fires;

Whereas approximately one million residents of Southern California have been forced to evacuate their homes and businesses due to the fires;

Whereas the effect of the wildfires on Southern California families and businesses is still being felt;

Whereas thousands of firefighters from California and neighboring states and countries continue to respond to the fires, risking health and safety and exhibiting resilience and courage to rescue residents and fight the blazes;

Whereas over 2,500 National Guardsmen and other active duty military personnel are actively engaged in supporting firefighters and relief operations;

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;

Whereas hundreds of volunteers took time from their daily lives to help ensure that evacuated families are sheltered, clothed, fed, and emotionally comforted through this traumatic event;

Whereas it is clear that the continued commitment and heroism exhibited by firefighters have saved countless lives, homes, and businesses;

Whereas the people of California and the nation recognize that the dedication of firefighters will remain steadfast throughout the ongoing efforts; and

Whereas a major Federal disaster declaration was issued on October 24, 2007; Now therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—(1) recognizes and honors the heroic service, actions, and sacrifices of first responders, National Guardsmen, and law enforcement personnel, state and local officials, volunteers, and others who participated in responding to the October 21, 2007 outbreak of wildfires in Southern California;

(2) expresses its commitment to the residents of Southern California as they begin to rebuild their community and their lives; and (3) vows its full support to and solidarity with the state of California.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I am pleased to join my colleagues in consideration of House Resolution 778, a resolution that recognizes and honors the heroic service, actions, and sacrifices of first responders, National Guardsmen, volunteers, and others who participated in responding to the outbreak of wildfires in Southern California. House Resolution 778, which has 53 cosponsors, was

introduced by Representative ZOE LOFGREN.

Mr. Speaker, wildfires in Southern California have destroyed over 1,000 homes and scorched more than 400,000 acres. From San Diego to Malibu, hundreds of thousands were warned to leave their homes. More than 250,000 were told to flee in San Diego County alone. There were at least 18 different wildfires in Southern California.

I commend my colleague, Representative LOFGREN, for seeking to honor the first responders and to express full support to the victims of the Southern California wildfires and urge the swift passage of this resolution.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge passage of this resolution honoring and recognizing the heroic efforts of the firefighters and other first responders to the fires in Southern California.

Mr. Speaker, I think we should take a moment to ponder what happens when a situation like this occurs. A disaster occurs and people appear, seemingly out of nowhere, to offer every type of help and assistance. They are organized and disciplined and effective and precise. They are heroic and swift and knowledgeable and kind.

But who are they? Who are these men and women who drive toward the disaster when the rest of us drive away? Who leaves behind his home and family for perhaps weeks on end and goes to help others? Who sets up the shelters and the medical aid stations? Who helps seniors and the infirm evacuate? Who rushes to save Los Angeles and Ventura and Orange and Riverside and Santa Barbara and San Bernardino and San Diego?

In the case of California, about 2,500 citizen soldiers, we call them National Guardsmen, have raced to the rescue. So have countless numbers of firefighters, law enforcement, and medical personnel.

We owe these people and their families a debt of gratitude. We couldn't do what they do. Thank God they can.

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

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the California Democratic delegation, I rise along with Speaker PELOSI, Chairman WAXMAN, and my Republican colleagues to honor the heroic services, actions, and sacrifices of our first responders, State and local officials, volunteers, and others who participated in responding to last week's devastating outbreak of wildfires in Southern California.

This was the worst outbreak of wildfires in California history. Over 500,000 acres burned, nearly 1 million residents evacuated, over 3,000 residential and commercial properties destroyed or damaged, 116 reported injuries, seven reported fatalities.

I have no doubt that the quick and valiant response of our firefighters, police officers, National Guard, and thousands of selfless volunteers saved lives and hundreds of millions of dollars. The State of California owes these brave men and women our gratitude. California and our Nation also owes a debt of gratitude to our neighbors, Canada and Mexico, for volunteering their own firefighters and equipment.

I would also like to commend the cities, counties, and State for showing great leadership and preparedness in dealing with this disaster. Leadership at the local and State government levels allowed for effective coordination with Federal agencies in the allocation of resources and making sure our residents were out of harm's way.

Because of the change in weather pattern, coupled with the extraordinary efforts of firefighters, we are now beginning to contain most of these fires and are closing the evacuation shelters. However, many families are going back to literally ruins of their former homes, lives, and communities.

I ask that all of my colleagues continue to stand with our California neighbors as they begin to rebuild their lives. The fires may be dying down, but the emotional impact and financial hardship faced by these families are only beginning.

With the leadership of Speaker PELOSI, Senators FEINSTEIN and BOXER, and Chairman DICKS, we hope to quickly move an emergency appropriations bill to help the rebuilding process for the families, cities, and counties affected by this devastating wildfire.

This resolution today, cosponsored by every single member of our 53-member-strong bipartisan delegation is, I believe, the first legislative step forward for Congress to meet the needs of California as she recovers from this disaster.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER).

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my very good friend from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) for yielding me time.

I thank Mr. CLAY for his management of this measure. And I join with my colleagues, Ms. LOFGREN and the Republicans who have joined as cosponsors of this very important resolution.

A week ago at this time, Mr. Speaker, there were no fewer than 14 major fires with hundreds of thousands of acres on fire in Southern California. As we know, nearly 2,000 homes were destroyed in those fires and we went through a number of very, very challenging days through last week. And while we still have fires raging, we have had a great deal of success. We have had a great deal of success in the aftermath of these fires due to the stellar leadership provided by Governor Schwarzenegger; by President Bush;

and our Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff; the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, David Paulison; and a wide range of other local governments involved. And I have to say the leadership of our congressional delegation has really been a great example.

We are joined on the floor here by my friend from San Diego (Mr. BILBRAY) whose district was impacted. And last Thursday I had the privilege of traveling with our colleagues, Senator FEINSTEIN, and I see Congressman FILNER is here as well from San Diego, and others who joined with the members of the San Diego delegation who were there to have the chance to see firsthand the devastation that was caused by these fires.

BRIAN BILBRAY is someone who has, time and time again, stepped up to the plate to deal with challenges that he has faced in the San Diego area, and what we saw last Thursday was another example. He was able to take the Governor of California and the President of the United States to meet individually with those who had been victimized by the fires and for all of us to join with Mr. FILNER and Mrs. DAVIS and Mr. ISSA and Mr. HUNTER in talking to those firefighters who have come from all over, not just the State of California but from around the country.

□ 1530

Now, Mr. Speaker, the State of California is the State that is best equipped to deal with the disaster of fires. And I say that because California has this very unique structure known as a Unified Command. Now, what that consists of is, rather than having these disparate firefighting organizations come into an area and take on the issue of dealing with fire, the Unified Command means that the highest ranking fire official, the fire chief in a particular area that knows that country, with the canyons and the valleys and the challenges geographically that they face, is there to provide the direction and the leadership. And that is the reason, Mr. Speaker, that we have had such success within the past week in dealing with what was described by a 36-year veteran battalion chief from San Diego as the worst fire that he has ever seen in California's history.

I also want to say that I express appreciation to our colleagues from all across the country. We have, again, firefighters who came from around California and around the country; and I know it was in large part due to the encouragement that our bipartisan Congress, that Members on both sides of the aisle of the Congress, from both the House and the Senate, have provided in encouraging these courageous firefighters to come forward and provide the assistance necessary.

There are going to be challenging days ahead, as my colleague, Ms. LOFGREN, said, Mr. Speaker. We obviously are going to have to deal with

continued fighting of the fires and also rebuilding. And there also will be, I believe, a very important debate as we look at the days and weeks and months ahead, and I'm talking about the challenge we face in dealing with disasters.

We know that fire is just one of the multifarious disasters that we deal with in California. There are disasters that hit other parts of the country. I think we need to have a debate on the role that the Federal Government plays in dealing with these disasters. I have talked with a number of people who are interested in now getting involved, the Center for Strategic International Studies, John Hamre there, I've talked to Director Paulison about this.

We have, again, a great deal of work, but at this time, this resolution is designed to focus on the fires in California and express our appreciation for the support that has been provided, and also our thoughts and prayers for those who have been victimized by this.

So, Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding, and I thank all those who have been involved in supporting this resolution.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to yield 3 minutes to my friend from California (Mr. BACA).

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

Mr. BACA. First of all, I would like to thank Mr. CLAY in reference to H.R. 778. I would also like to thank my good friend ZOE LOFGREN for her work with the California delegation and her leadership in bringing this resolution to the floor in a bipartisan fashion. And I state "in a bipartisan fashion" because it impacts the whole State of California.

Last week's disaster was a painful time for all of us in the communities of Southern California. Recent estimates show that the fire destroyed over 2,800 structures, including over 2,000 homes. And the fires also destroyed more than 500 acres of land in an area that doubles the size of New York City.

Seven people were killed, 113 firefighters and 26 civilians were injured, and I state, 113 firefighters and 26 civilians were injured. These are people that were willing to fight the fires to save not only their own, but to save the lives of many individuals who were impacted.

This past weekend, I had a chance to see the devastation firsthand and visit with many of our evacuees in the shelter included in my district, with a total of 4,000 that we evacuated into the district at the Orange County Fairgrounds in my area. And while we can never really understand the losses suffered by so many, we share their pain. We share their pain.

We stand together today united as one House first and foremost to say thank you for the heroic actions and sacrifices of the first responders. And I say "the first responders," the firefighters who are willing to put them-

selves on the line to save many others, law enforcement officers, the National Guard, and many of the volunteers.

We also stand here to say to the people of Southern California, we are with you. We are committed to rebuilding our homes and communities in California and rebuilding the lives of those who have lost so much. Our first priority right now is to make sure that everyone is housed, clothed and fed, and after that we will begin to rebuild. But once the smoke is cleared, we will work towards a long-term solution to do everything we can to prevent disasters like this from ever happening again.

We have to take a realistic look at the situation. All data indicates that the fires nationwide are increasing in size and intensity. Those of us in Congress must respond to these warnings. Our planet is changing; we must acknowledge that. We need to meet the new challenges we are facing. We need to better fund our firefighters and our Forest Service. And we have to take a serious look at where we build our developments.

We must do everything in our power to prevent destruction of life, property, and our environment. Let us take the time to reflect on what we have lost. And we thank God, and I say we thank God for what we still have. Let us say thanks to those heroes who pulled us through this horrible week. Let all those who have lost a home or a loved one know that we stand with you.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Imperial Beach, California, my friend, Mr. BILBRAY.

Mr. BILBRAY. I thank the gentleman. It's Solano Beach, California. I know one beach is like the other. I was raised in one, but live in Carlsbad. But I would just like to clarify.

This resolution is recognizing the men and women who were fighting on the front line. And I think there are two big advantages we had in San Diego. San Diego County lost over 1,500 homes. Many of those homes could have been saved under all kinds of different theories. But the fact is we had one great advantage that we did not lose more. And it was not just the men and women who were fighting on the line that you saw on television, but it was the men and women who serve in a very unique California experience called the Unified Disaster Council, where San Diego County itself houses the chairman of the county, and every mayor, police chief and fire chief in a system of networks, with a common communications system, with a common planning system toward the local providers who were able to provide the base and the foundation for State and Federal agencies to come in and build upon. And that was essential.

And if there was any lesson that I would hope the people of the United States would take from our tragedy

that we had in our county was that preparedness starts at the local level, and that you can never expect a State or Federal agency to replace the needed foundation and the networking that you have at the local level.

So get your act together locally, communicate and build a system, because a crisis in one way or the other is coming your way. And San Diego, I was very proud, as the former chairman of the Disaster Preparedness Council, I was proud to see how far they have come along and how well they are organized.

A lot of people may not know that a lot of the great savings we had, when the fires were moving towards my home in Carlsbad, my mother got the call over her phone through a thing called "Reverse 911" that notified her that she was in a warning area, needed to pack up and be ready to leave at a moment's notice. She was assured that if her area was becoming a danger zone, she would be notified by the same phone communication that had told her to prepare for that. This is the kind of local networks that we need to continue to build, not just in California, where we have historically done it through the county system, but throughout this Nation.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that we also recognize that this infrastructure gave our men and women, the firefighters not just from San Diego County or Southern California, but from the entire State, from the north down to the south, gave us the capability to respond to this crisis in a way that I think those of us in California should be very proud of.

The crisis has not passed totally; we still have threats out there. But the fact is I think we can build on building better communication between the Federal, State and local community. But the foundation has been set. And I would invite anyone who is interested in preparing their community for their crisis to try to learn from our mistakes and our successes in California and San Diego so that we can all build for a safer neighborhood. And when we do that preparation, we not only make ourselves safer, we protect those men and women that are firefighters to avoid their exposure to risk by us doing the right thing ahead of the fires.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. Davis).

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, Kurt Vonnegut once said, "I can think of no more stirring symbol of man's humanity to man than a fire engine," and I agree. Last week, my district in San Diego bore witness to extraordinary displays of humanity and resiliency as wildfires swept through our region.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the firefighters, National Guard and military personnel who fought and continue to fight the fires on the ground and in the air. Some of them lost their homes, others were seriously injured,

and all made enormous sacrifices to ensure public safety.

The firefighters with whom I spoke, it has been mentioned that they came from throughout the State and beyond, said Mother Nature outdid them on this one, but they do not feel defeated, and instead they were anxious to get back to work performing their job.

In addition, I think it bears repeating that San Diego County and City leadership should be commended for coordinating a quick and effective response. And I agree, San Diego region should be used as a model for the country. There is much that we have learned and much that we can also teach.

Last week, firefighters caused the largest evacuation in California's history. As residents fled the fires, volunteers from all walks of life came forward to help the evacuees. I saw such a tremendous outpouring of compassion and support at the evacuation centers. San Diegans rolled up their sleeves and found a way to help their neighbors during this crisis.

At Qualcomm Stadium, I spoke to a volunteer who is a professional tour guide. He realized he could put his organizational skills and strong voice to work at the relief center. The coordinators at the stadium agreed and assigned him to training volunteers.

I also saw staff from the City's Park and Rec Department organizing entertainment for children and families, volunteers passing out food, and even massage therapists helping evacuees to relax.

Although the majority of fires are now under control and many residents have left the evacuation centers, the San Diego region faces a lot of hard work in the months ahead. Our prayers go out to the many families who lost their homes.

As the shock and heartbreaks subside, we must do everything in our power to ensure that full recovery is within sight as soon as possible. And as we think ahead, Mr. Speaker, to the precarious nature that we are in and the inevitability of future massive fires, we must also engage in the most serious discussions of lessons learned.

I support House Resolution 778.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA), a member of the committee.

Mr. ISSA. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is an excellent example of bipartisan behavior in the drafting. It reflects quite well what we went through in California last week. Particularly, I take note of the fact that this was the largest fire because it had the most fuel. This is one of the challenges we face in California. We have hundreds of thousands of acres that may not have been cleared or burned in more than three decades. That continues to be a challenge. And this body has to take some initiative to correct that. We need to have the ability to clear areas before they burn. But even if we do, there will be fires.

I would hope for many of the people that hear us today and read the RECORD of today's Journal that they will recognize that some of the information that perhaps was put out was incorrect over the airwaves. Many people talked in terms of too many people too close to wilderness.

When the President visited Congressman BILBRAY and my district, Rancho Bernardo, which is at the heart of our two districts, Rancho Bernardo is a suburban, "Leave It to Beaver" community. This is an area with an interstate on both sides of it. The fire went on both sides of a 10-lane interstate. It jumped it because 80-mile-an-hour winds will do that. We didn't create that in California; California had that when we arrived.

On the hilltops, firefighters were looking at just ordinary backyards, sometimes hillsides, but ordinary backyards of half-acre, acre lots, or less, and in fact trying to save the houses on them.

So, I would hope that people throughout the country, when they try to characterize what went on in California, would take an opportunity to meet with somebody from the districts in California, Congressman FILNER, Congressman BILBRAY, myself, and others, because we saw firsthand that firefighters had residential fires from 80-mile-an-hour-, 100-degree-driven firestorms.

□ 1545

Additionally, I would like to bring up something that may not often cross the awareness of the men and women around the country who know about this fire, and that is we not only executed in San Diego County all of the plays that were in the playbook, all of the things which were written on how to fight a fire well from Malibu to the Mexican border, but additionally we wrote some new chapters.

I am very proud that the United States Marines of Camp Pendleton and the Marine Corps Air Station at Miramar joined the fight for the first time beyond those who were part of the plan. We were able to mobilize, on any given day, as many as eight additional aircraft which had never been designated to fight fires off the base. They were made available due to the initiative of the Northern Command and of Major General Lehnert and others in the chain of command who said, We have the ability to fight fire. We fight them on our bases every day. We will bring those to bear.

With cooperation from the department called CAL FIRE in California and the Governor's office, that was made to happen in less than 48 hours. So when the book is written on the evacuation and on the fighting of the fire in Southern California, yes, it was devastating for over 5,000 families that lost homes, that lost commercial buildings, that lost trailers or that, in fact, lost their farms and ranches, but, in fact, this was a well-fought fire in

which the people of San Diego came together to do the right thing.

I am very proud of the people of San Diego and all of Southern California. I am also very thankful for the United States Marine Corps and the other first responders who made such a difference in our time of need. I thank you for this resolution, and I support and encourage all those to vote for it.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I now yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California, Madam Speaker.

Ms. PELOSI. I thank the gentleman for yielding and for bringing this legislation to the floor. I want to commend the cochairs of our delegation, Congresswoman ZOE LOFGREN and Congressman DAVID DREIER, both from California, being the cochairs of our delegation, and all of our colleagues who come to the floor today and join us in expressing our appreciation to our men and women in uniform, our first responders, emergency services personnel, and our firefighters who conducted themselves in such a brave, brave and tireless manner to protect the people and the homes and businesses of California.

Today, we thank God that the winds have finally died down and our brave first responders were able to contain the largest fire in the Golden State's history. As I said, our first responders, our firefighters, were courageous and tireless. More than 11,000 personnel, including thousands of firefighters from across California and neighboring States, and thank you to our neighboring States for their participation, and 2,500 of our brave National Guardsmen and -women worked through long days and nights to battle the dangerous flames.

In doing so, as I said, they saved lives, homes and businesses. For that, we will be forever grateful.

Today in California, five fires still burn. As these fires are quenched, the hard work of restoring the regular order of residents' lives begins. We can now begin the accounting of our staggering losses: seven dead and more than 100 injured; 500,000 acres burned; 1 million residents forced to evacuate; 1,400 homes destroyed across seven counties.

But as the victims of the fire know, the tragedy can't be expressed in those numbers. It is in the lost baby photos and treasured mementos gone forever. It is in the fear of knowing that in an instant life can take a tragic turn.

I salute Governor Schwarzenegger and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services for their efforts and leadership in protecting the people in the area and containing the fires.

I am very pleased that President Bush responded to the request of the Governor and the California bipartisan delegation in declaring what was happening in California as a major disaster.

Today, we vow that our response to this fire will not end once those flames

are extinguished. The California congressional delegation will work in a bipartisan way with the entire Congress, with the Governor and the President to ensure short-term and long-term needs are met.

To those who have suffered personal losses, whether it's the loss of a loved one, personal injury, loss of their homes and their communities, as Speaker of the House, I extend the deepest sympathy and the fullest support of the House of Representatives. We stand with you today and in the days of rebuilding to come.

Once again, I acknowledge the leadership of Mr. CLAY and Mr. DUNCAN and thank them for giving us this opportunity to express our appreciation to our firefighters and our first responders in California.

Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I represent the southern part of the City of San Diego where we had thousands of evacuees, hundreds of homes lost, a really terrifying situation for many people. Of course, getting back on their feet will be a major, major challenge. But what we saw, as we have heard from my colleagues, is cooperation, cooperation from all levels of government, from the cities, the fire districts, county, State, Federal, and also international, which no one has mentioned up to this point. I watched as 60 firefighters, bomberos as we call them, from Tijuana, in Mexico, came to help and were a part of the team as we fought the Harris fire in southern San Diego. I think that was a very important contribution.

I had the opportunity to talk to the President as we flew to the fires. He understood that he needed to be visible very early, which was very hopeful, and that FEMA had to be proactive and not just reactive. The blue shirts of FEMA were on the job and visible everywhere, and their local assistance centers were set up very much earlier than in any previous disaster, I think. And that gave hope to many people. Those assistance centers, again, before even many of the evacuees had been allowed to return home were there and helping people.

We saw the hope on people's faces as they saw this cooperation in getting help from everywhere. And although they face a very difficult time, they do have hope. It was the volunteers, of course, our firefighters and our officers, police officers and other first responders, but the volunteers came from all over. Some of them had evacuated their own homes. Some of them lost their own homes. Teachers and others were there to help the children while away the time and even learn while they were there, people who brought

food, people who brought clothing and psychological help, massages and medical help. So all of these people were involved. It was an incredible sight to behold as we went to Qualcomm Stadium or any of the evacuation centers around the county. You saw everybody pitching in. It was that coming together in San Diego that will give hope to the people who face challenges in the future and that got us through this very terrifying time.

I thank the House for this resolution in support of the people of California.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS).

Mrs. CAPPS. I thank my colleague from Missouri for yielding.

As a representative of areas affected by the recent wildfires and a cosponsor of H. Res. 778, I rise in its strong support. Over the last 10 days, wildfires have devastated much of Southern California. Hundreds of thousands of acres have been burned. Thousands of homes and businesses have been destroyed.

While this tragedy has faded from the Nation's headlines, thousands of our first responders, military personnel, volunteers continue to battle the fires and to aid in the recovery effort. Today we commend these amazing individuals. Thousands of firefighters from throughout California and across the Nation put their lives on the line to protect our communities. They battled out-of-control flames fanned by restless hurricane-force winds, and they fought tirelessly for 12, 24, even 36 hours straight.

In addition, countless police officers and military personnel and other first responders successfully executed the largest evacuation in California's history. Tens of thousands of evacuees were sheltered with ample food, supplies, and facilities. Thousands of generous individuals have given their time, their money, their resources to help victims of this tragedy to get back on their feet.

Mr. Speaker, California is sadly all too familiar with wildfires. My district includes parts of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, each of which experience wildfires almost annually. The most recent was Zaca fire which burned more than 240,000 acres of these three counties and lasted almost 3 months.

I am proud to say from firsthand experience that California's emergency preparedness systems and procedures are among the best in the Nation, I would say in the world. As the wildfires grew in size and numbers, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services was able to coordinate and allocate resources to the areas that needed them most, regardless of jurisdiction. Local firefighters from San Diego battled flames along with colleagues from Nevada, while planes from Wyoming and

Colorado filled their tanks at Channel Islands Air National Guard Station just outside my district.

If it were not for this organized and swift effort, many more acres, homes, and lives would have been lost. Mr. Speaker, as we move forward, I hope we can learn from this experience to help prevent such a tragedy from repeating itself in the future. And to the countless men and women who helped in this tragedy, we commend you and we thank you for your heroic efforts.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to our colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), who represents some of the City of San Diego and much of San Diego County.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my great colleague for yielding me some time and just follow my colleagues to again commend all of those who helped to take on this incredible challenge and to defeat this fire. Even though it destroyed lots of sagebrush land and lots of back country and homes and buildings and took some lives, we had a well-coordinated effort.

Let me just point out also that I know Mr. ISSA talked about the United States Marines and the United States Navy especially in the San Diego region working hand in hand with State and local firefighting officials and volunteers and the crews and especially in the area of the air war against the fire undertaking this challenge and doing very, very well.

At the other level, at the level of bringing in assets from out of the State, I think we should also commend General Steven Blum, who is head of the National Guard for this country. And even before he received the request from the State of California, even though the request had been initiated by Governor Schwarzenegger, it goes through a number of bureaus and agencies before it actually gets to the unit that is going to send the particular firefighting aircraft to the location where it is going to engage the fire.

Before he received the request from the State of California, General Steven Blum deployed aircraft and put out the deployment order for aircraft from Colorado, Wyoming and North Carolina. These are the so-called MAFFS units, C-130 units that have the ability to put down about 3,000 gallons of fire retardant per aircraft. They can pave an area a quarter of a mile wide. They do an extremely effective job of fighting fires.

General Blum ordered those aircraft deployed to California before he had the order to deploy them. Before he had the request, he said, I am going to send them out as a training mission, and by the time they get there, the paperwork will catch up with them.

So I think we all owe him a debt, and all those wonderful crews that came in from Wyoming, North Carolina and Colorado, as well as all the other crews in various other dimensions of the firefighting who arrived from out of State.

So, Mr. Speaker, this was a wonderful team effort, I think perhaps a model for the country. We have a few rough edges to work on for the next one, a few reforms to make, and we are going to do that. But we had a wonderful, wonderful taking up of this enormous challenge. Our challenge now is to rebuild; and, similarly, we will all work together as a team to do that. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

□ 1600

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I reserve my time.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, so I will simply close for our side by saying these were fires and evacuations of historic proportions. They were handled in absolutely the best way possible, and I commend everyone involved in responding to these disasters and urge passage of this resolution. I think it is something that all of our colleagues can enthusiastically support.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to unanimously support this resolution and show full support to the victims of these wildfires, the people of Southern California. I urge swift passage.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 778. The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

RECOGNIZING ANNIVERSARIES OF MASS MOVEMENT FOR SOVIET JEWISH FREEDOM AND FREEDOM SUNDAY RALLY FOR SOVIET JEWRY

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 759) recognizing the 40th Anniversary of the Mass Movement for Soviet Jewish Freedom and the 20th Anniversary of the Freedom Sunday Rally for Soviet Jewry on the Mall in Washington, DC.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 759

Whereas, in 1964, the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry (AJCSJ) was founded to spearhead a national campaign on behalf of Soviet Jewry;

Whereas, in 1964, the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry was founded to demand freedom for Soviet Jewry;

Whereas, in 1964, thousands of college students rallied on behalf of Soviet Jewry in front of the United Nations;

Whereas Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War inspired Soviet Jews to intensify their efforts to win the right to emigrate;

Whereas, in 1967, Soviets launched an anti-Zionist propaganda campaign in the state-controlled mass media, and a crackdown on Jewish autonomy, galvanizing a mass advocacy movement in the United States;

Whereas, in 1970, the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry was founded as a coalition of local grass-roots "action" councils supporting freedom for Jews of the Soviet Union;

Whereas, in 1971, the severe sentences, including death, meted out to nine Leningrad Jews who attempted to hijack a plane to flee the Soviet Union spurred worldwide protests;

Whereas, in 1971, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) succeeded the AJCSJ;

Whereas, in 1971, mass emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union began;

Whereas, in 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed into law the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Trade Act of 1974, prohibiting the extension of trade benefits to countries that limit emigration, and otherwise infringe basic human rights;

Whereas, in 1978, the Congressional Wives for Soviet Jewry was founded;

Whereas, in 1982, President Ronald Reagan enacted Public Law 97-157, expressing the sense of the Congress that the Soviet Union should cease its repressive actions against those individuals who seek the freedom to emigrate or to practice their religious or cultural traditions, drawing special attention to the hardships and discrimination imposed upon the Jewish community in the Soviet Union;

Whereas, in 1983, the bipartisan Congressional Human Rights Caucus was founded to advance the cause of human rights;

Whereas, in 1984, the Congressional Coalition for Soviet Jews was founded;

Whereas, in 1987, an estimated 250,000 people demonstrated on the Mall in Washington before the start of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, in an unprecedented rally that helped give the issue added visibility on the national scene;

Whereas, in 1989, the Soviet Union opened its doors to the millions of Soviet Jews who had been held as virtual prisoners within their own country;

Whereas, in 1991, the Supreme Soviet passed a law that codified the right of every Soviet citizen to emigrate, precipitating massive emigration by Jews from the Soviet Union, primarily to Israel and the United States;

Whereas the hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the Soviet Union and former Soviet republics have greatly enriched their new-found homes in areas as diverse as business, professional sports, the arts, politics, and philanthropy;

Whereas, in 1992, Congress passed the Freedom Support Act, making aid for the fifteen former Soviet republics contingent on progress towards the implementation of a democratic system, and respect for human rights;

Whereas, since 2000, more than 400 independent Jewish cultural organizations and 30 Jewish day schools have been established in the former Soviet Union, giving rise to a renewal of Jewish life;

Whereas NCSJ and its partners have performed exceptionally by continually promoting the safety and security of Jews in the former Soviet Union;

Whereas continued acts of anti-Semitism and xenophobia in the former Soviet Union are reprehensible and respect for democracy,

religious freedom, and human rights in the former Soviet republics needs promotion and strengthening; and

Whereas it is the 40th anniversary of the mass movement for freedom by and on behalf of Soviet Jewry: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That Congress recognizes the 20th anniversary of the Freedom Sunday Rally for Soviet Jews in Washington, DC, which embodies the American principle of citizen activism for the greater good.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I am pleased to join my colleagues in the consideration of H. Res. 759, a bill that recognizes the 40th Anniversary of the Mass Movement for Soviet Jewish Freedom and the 20th Anniversary of the Freedom Sunday Rally for Soviet Jewry on the Mall in Washington, D.C. H. Res. 759, which has 57 cosponsors, was introduced by Representative HENRY WAXMAN on October 18, 2007. House Resolution 759 was reported from the Oversight Committee on October 23, 2007, by voice vote.

Mr. Speaker, the former Soviet Union today has the third-largest Jewish community in the world. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the Russian Empire was home to the world's largest Jewish community. In the late 19th century, over 5 million Jews lived as a persecuted minority in Czarist Russia. This indifference towards Jews continued throughout the 20th century under the leadership of Secretary General Joseph Stalin and Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union.

In the mid-1960s, Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin was reported to have said "the road is open and no problem exists" for Soviet Jews who might want to leave for Israel. This remark sparked an increase in the efforts of Jews to leave the Soviet Union and helped initiate international efforts to facilitate their mass movement from Soviet Russia.

In 1967, in response to earlier Soviet Jewry advocacy efforts, Russian authorities allowed some Jewish citizens to leave for family reunification in Israel. Due to the lack of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Soviet Union, most emigres traveled to Vienna where Israeli authorities flew them to Israel. By March 1976, the majority of emigres who left on visas for Israel chose to resettle in the United States and other Western countries.