

HONORING THE HEROES OF THE  
FORT KENT FIRE

**HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD**

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 27, 2012*

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the people of Fort Kent, and the surrounding communities, who responded so admirably to the massive fire in downtown Fort Kent.

In the early morning of March 25, 2012, a massive fire erupted in Fort Kent, Maine destroying several downtown buildings and damaging local businesses. Although these buildings contained numerous apartments, there was mercifully no loss of life. That is because of the heroic efforts of eight local fire departments, the Fort Kent Police, and a town employee who first spotted the flames.

Tenants living on the second floor of the Nadeau's House of Furniture building were evacuated with only minutes to spare as the fire quickly spread. The heat was strong enough to damage businesses located across the street and melt nearby street signs. Moreover, it took thousands of gallons of water, pumped from the St. John River, to finally quell the flames.

The heroism of the Fort Kent Volunteer Fire Department and fire crews from St. Agatha, Frenchville, Madawaska, North Lakes, Eagle Lake, St. Francois, New Brunswick and Clair, New Brunswick cannot be overstated. Neither can the bravery of Matt Bard who first alerted authorities, Tony Enevera and Richard Martin of the Fort Kent Police Department who were among the first on the scene, the Fort Kent Ambulance Service, or the scores of others who helped avert an even greater tragedy.

I am grateful to the Pine Tree Chapter of the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army for providing such immediate relief to the displaced families. I am also extremely heartened by the outpouring of support that has come from the Fort Kent community. Local business leaders have already launched a fundraising campaign to further assist those who lost their belongings in the fire. I know that their combined strength will bring the town through this difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring all the heroes who responded to the Fort Kent fire.

RECOGNIZING BENJAMIN C. PABLO  
ON BEING NAMED THE U.S.  
SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION'S  
VETERAN SMALL BUSINESS  
CHAMPION OF THE YEAR  
FOR 2012

**HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO**

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 27, 2012*

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Benjamin C. Pablo for receiving the U.S. Small Business Administration's 2012 Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year Award. Ben is a United States Army veteran who served for 22 years, and is currently the Vice President and Community Development Officer at the Bank of Guam, where

he is fondly referred to as its "veteran ambassador."

Ben has worked to create educational opportunities for veterans and servicemembers interested in simplifying their finances or opening up a small business. Most notably, in 2010, he helped establish the Guam Veterans Business Outreach Center, which provides resources and training workshops to veterans. Through the outreach center, Ben consults with local veterans on credit and lending criteria and also shares his expertise in creating and developing a successful business plan. Further, Ben helped secure the Bank of Guam's ability to administer SBA Patriot Express Loans to assist veteran clients and members of the military community in creating or expanding their small business.

Additionally, Ben devotes his time to participating in community service activities and civic organizations. He played an instrumental role in helping the Vietnam Veterans of Guam Chapter 668 in obtaining donations from the bank and other organizations to construct the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Walls, to memorialize the servicemembers from Guam killed during the Vietnam War. He also serves as the treasurer for Catholic Social Services (CSS) on Guam, and has been a board member for seven years. CSS is a nonprofit organization that provides numerous services to Guam's most vulnerable residents, including many veterans.

I commend Mr. Benjamin C. Pablo for working to improve veterans' business opportunities on Guam and for being SBA's Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year for 2012. I join our island in thanking him for his service to our country, and for his dedication to sharing his financial expertise with our veteran community on Guam.

RECOGNITION FOR THE PUBLIC  
SERVICE OF WILLIAM F. BUNTING

**HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 27, 2012*

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable individual, admired for his public service and expert contributions to meteorology and weather forecasting, Mr. William F. Bunting.

Mr. Bunting is an esteemed veteran of his field. His more than 25 years of experience has taken him across this land—from New York City to Lansing, MI to Norman, OK, to Kansas City, MO, and for the last decade to Fort Worth, TX. He has painstakingly forecast and monitored a number of major weather events during his time in the weather service, including the chain of 59 tornadoes in Oklahoma and Kansas in 1990, the Kansas City flash flood in the fall of 1998, and the urban tornado in downtown Fort Worth in 2000. Mr. Bunting's judgment and decision-making in weather forecasting and storm damage assessment has been of tremendous value in service to the public.

Mr. Bunting has made significant contributions to research and public understanding of severe storms. He has assembled an extensive website of data to upper air soundings, surface analyses, and weather prediction satellite imagery. He has authored many papers

on severe storms and climatic weather, lectured at more than a dozen weather warning workshops and conducted more than 500 presentations to spotter and emergency management groups, civic organizations, businesses and schools. There is no question that Bill Bunting has invested his knowledge and concerns to enhance the safety of hundreds of thousands of people.

As Meteorologist in Charge at the National Weather Service's forecast office in Fort Worth, Mr. Bunting has supervised a staff of more than 25 forecasters, technicians and support personnel and been responsible for all forecasts, weather advisories, watches and warnings for 46 North Texas counties. Now, after 10 years in Fort Worth, Mr. Bunting is called to serve as Operations Branch Chief at the Storm Prediction Center in Oklahoma beginning in early April. We wish him well in this new position.

It is my great privilege to recognize Mr. Bill Bunting, Meteorologist-in-Charge at the National Weather Service, for his commitment to people's safety, his dedication to the study and understanding of meteorology and for his service to the many citizens whose lives have been saved by being forewarned by his forecasts.

HONORING MS. PHILLIS OETERS

**HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 27, 2012*

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, in recognition of Women's History month I rise today to honor Ms. Phillis Oeters, an outstanding individual who has continuously supported the South Florida community.

Ms. Oeters currently serves as the Corporate Vice President of Government and Community Relations for Baptist Health South Florida, the largest not-for-profit healthcare organization in the region. As Corporate Vice President, Ms. Oeters is responsible for strategic planning of government and community relations, developing a state and federal legislative agenda consisting of health-care funding, insurance regulation, and general health policy development.

Additionally, Ms. Oeters serves on many community boards including the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, where she will assume the position of Chairman in June 2012. She also serves on the boards of Beacon Council, United Way, Nat Moore Foundation, Orange Bowl, among many others. From 2003 to 2008, she was Chairman of the Board of the Neurologically Injured Compensation Fund for the State of Florida, a billion dollar fund responsible for caring for children injured at birth. Ms. Oeters is a founding member and former Chairman of the President's Council of 100 for Florida International University.

Ms. Oeters has been a long-time supporter of the American Red Cross and was Chairman of the Board for Greater Miami and the Keys Chapter for three years. Amongst her countless duties she has chaired the Spectrum Awards for Women since 1997. She was recently recognized for her community service by receiving "The Champion of Fundraising Award" and "Building our Community Humanitarian of the Year Award" from the March of

Dimes. The American Cancer Society awarded her the "Inner Circle of 12 Distinction," which honors 12 outstanding women for their leadership, volunteerism, community involvement and dedication to the ACS mission. In addition to her admirable accomplishments, Ms. Oeters finds the time to be an adventure traveler, avid sailor, and equestrian. In 1988, she was the first woman to win the J/30 North America Sail Championship presented by the American Yacht Club.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to pay tribute to Ms. Phillis Oeters for her continued service to the South Florida community and I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing this extraordinary individual.

12TH ANNUAL CONGRESSIONAL  
CIVIL RIGHTS PILGRIMAGE

**HON. JANICE HAHN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 27, 2012*

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker. I rise today in honor of the Faith & Politics Institute's 12th Annual Congressional Civil Rights Pilgrimage to Birmingham, Selma and Montgomery, Alabama, which I had the great privilege of joining.

This pilgrimage was about coming together—not as Democrats and Republicans—but as Americans, as men and women who believe somehow and some way that we have a can find a way to create the American community. The non-violent and peaceful Americans who risked so much simply to have the government honor their rights under our Constitution reminds me of what it means to be a patriot. In the face of brutal beatings, fire hoses, cattle prods, trampling by horses and in some cases death, these heroes forced America to face its past and present, and change the way it treated its own citizens.

Our pilgrimage included visits to many historic places in Alabama that changed the course of history for all Americans. In Montgomery, we visited Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. began his ministry and the parsonage where he and his family lived through two bombings. Other visits in Montgomery included First Baptist Church where the Rev. Dr. Ralph Abernathy served as pastor, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Rosa Parks Museum and the Capitol—the building from which Governor George Wallace declared he would uphold segregation laws and on whose steps the Voting Rights March culminated.

My father, Kenny Hahn, took an enormous risk early in his public career to welcome Martin Luther King Jr. to Los Angeles. He did it because it was the right thing to do. This trip reminded me how important it was to stand up for what you believe, like my father did in 1961, and throughout his career. We must live up to the example set for us by leaders of the Civil Rights era by continuing the fight for social justice and for the rights of all Americans. I would hope that every member of Congress would take this pilgrimage during their career and that each American learns more about a group of men and women who stood up for and changed our nation.

CONVOY OF HOPE: A REAL  
"COMMUNITY ORGANIZER"

**HON. RON PAUL**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 27, 2012*

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, one of the great economic fallacies of our time is that if government doesn't do something, no one will. This disastrous fallacy underlies much of our national debate concerning health care, education, poverty, housing, and disaster relief, to name just a few issues.

But today I rise to applaud an organization that stands in stark refutation of that fallacy. Convoy of Hope, a private charity in Springfield, Missouri, does so much to help so many communities that the term "charity" doesn't begin to describe it. In fact, Convoy of Hope is equal parts grocer, clothier, health care provider, first responder, educator, and logistics expert. It works with communities in America and around the world bringing together local charities, businesses, churches, and government agencies to alleviate poverty and help people in the wake of disasters.

In other words, it is a real community organizer! The tremendous scope of its activities serves as a reminder that government is neither the sole nor the best provider of goods and services to people in need.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had the privilege of touring Convoy of Hope's headquarters and distribution center. It was a humbling but deeply encouraging experience, as I learned the full extent of its charitable outreach. Frankly I've never seen an organization so focused, efficient, and poised to do tremendous good for so many people.

First, some background: Convoy of Hope was founded by Hal and David Donaldson in 1994, who as young boys suffered the death of their father and subsequent poverty. But both men were struck by the outpouring of support their family received during that time; local churches and the community provided food and shelter. As a result, the two brothers both developed a deep sense of responsibility to help others in need.

In the years since, Convoy of Hope has helped more than 50 million individuals in more than 100 countries—giving away nearly \$300 million worth of food and supplies in the process.

Today, Convoy of Hope describes its mission as a global movement focused on four keys:

Children's feeding initiatives: the organization's overriding goal is to alleviate child hunger worldwide, providing food and clean water while also teaching agricultural techniques.

Community outreach: Convoy of Hope coordinates dozens of community events annually with thousands of volunteers and guests. These events involve free groceries; job and health fairs; and activities for children. As always, this outreach is available to all, without regard to age, race, physical appearance, or religion.

Disaster response: from an earthquake in Haiti to a tsunami in Indonesia to tornadoes in the American south, Convoy of Hope is a proven first responder. With its fleet of tractor trailers, 300,000 square foot warehouse, and high-tech mobile command center, it efficiently leverages relationships with private industry to help victims of worldwide disasters.

Partner resourcing: Convoy of Hope supports hundreds of like-minded organizations throughout the world, providing them with the food and supplies needed to help their communities. In this way Convoy of Hope consistently promotes local control, results, and accountability—while demonstrating humility and a willingness to let others shine and take credit in local communities.

Unlike government bureaucracies and many top-heavy private charities, Convoy of Hope applies a uniquely results-oriented approach to serving people. You won't find bloated salaries or patronage jobs at Convoy of Hope, nor will you find tony offices in New York or Los Angeles like so many nonprofits. In fact, the organization regularly spends only about 10 percent of its budget on overhead (a very low ratio in the nonprofit world), while employing a small staff of approximately 85. Watchdog group Charity Navigator consistently gives Convoy of Hope high marks for both its financial acumen and transparency.

Convoy of Hope also stretches its resources by developing strategic partnerships with private sector corporations, many of which provide in-kind donations of goods or services. This allows Convoy of Hope to offer a win-win proposition to prospective corporate donors: companies benefit from donating needed goods or services already in their inventory or area of expertise, while Convoy of Hope benefits from receiving the supplies and services it needs without paying retail prices. Its corporate donors—including Coca Cola; Nestle; Proctor & Gamble; Nestle; Georgia Pacific; Cargill; Del Monte; and FedEx—donate everything from building supplies to bottled water to toiletries. These partnerships with successful private companies demonstrate an entrepreneurial mindset that enables Convoy of Hope to help more people with less overhead.

Its massive distribution center and headquarters are located strategically in Missouri, where its fleet of trucks can dispatch quickly anywhere in America. It also operates six international distribution centers for logistical efficiency. By contrast, many government agencies purposely locate offices and facilities in different states at the clear expense of efficiency, solely to curry funding support from as many members of Congress and Senators as possible.

The next step for Convoy of Hope is an audacious one: a 50 state tour beginning in May designed to address poverty across the United States. The "Convoy of Hope Tour" will provide an average of \$1 million in goods and services to a community in a single day. Convoy of Hope's fleet of 18 wheel trucks will roll through every state, providing a wide variety of goods and practical services to those in need, including: groceries, job counseling, clothing, dental care, breast cancer screenings, haircuts, family portraits, children's activities, prayer and connections with local churches.

Finally, while Convoy of Hope is a Christian-based organization, it is nondenominational and strongly non-political in its approach, helping those in need without imposing their faith. Convoy of Hope employees simply believe their faith compels them to help their fellow man. This commonsense dictum guides infuses everything that Convoy of Hope does.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion let me state unequivocally that Convoy of Hope is doing tremendous work on behalf of mankind. I wish