

HONORING P. MICHAEL FREEMAN,  
FIRE CHIEF OF LOS ANGELES  
COUNTY

**HON. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 17, 2011*

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, we rise today to honor P. Michael Freeman, our good friend and long time Fire Chief of Los Angeles County. Chief Freeman is retiring after 22 years of service as the Fire Chief and 47 years as a firefighter. His commitment to the Los Angeles community, dedication to his employees, and strong leadership of the department will be greatly missed.

Chief Freeman was born and raised in Los Angeles County. He moved to Dallas and had a 25-year career with the Dallas Fire Department eventually rising to the rank of Acting Fire Chief. During that time, he served our nation honorably in the Army Reserve. It was in 1989 that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors made the wise decision to bring Chief Freeman home and make him the eighth Fire Chief of Los Angeles County.

Chief Freeman has been one of the most respected and longest serving public servants in the history of Los Angeles County. He has steadfastly faced the many challenges that come with running a fire department in a county of 10.5 million people, 4,000 square miles, 88 cities, 70 miles of coastline, dense urban areas, towering mountain ranges and deep forests. He has effectively led the fire department through the annual wildfire seasons, overseeing and containing some of the worst wildfires in the history of California in 2003 and 2009. He coordinated the response with other government agencies to the Northridge earthquake and the many other earthquakes that have rocked Los Angeles over the years. He has expertly overseen the daily operations of the department in responding to the multitude of emergencies that arise in an urban environment.

Chief Freeman has improved the department's emergency response capabilities and has been a strong advocate for the department with the federal government. He has worked with Members of Congress to ensure the first responder community has access to the federal resources they need for fire prevention programs, emergency response equipment, and natural disaster preparedness training. He has organized and led the effort to implement a new Los Angeles Regional Interoperable Communications System (LA-RICS). This system will allow first responders throughout the county to communicate effectively on solutions to emergencies ranging from major disasters to day-to-day events.

Chief Freeman has volunteered in numerous roles with the federal government to lend his expertise to improving emergency response services across the nation. He served as chairman of the board of FIRESCOPE and as a member of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Advisory Committee. In 2003, he was selected by Secretary Tom Ridge to serve as a member of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's emergency responder advisory committee. He also served as chairman of the International Association of Fire Chiefs Terrorism Task Force.

As the economy has weakened and the County has faced major budget challenges, Chief Freeman has done an outstanding job of maintaining the proper staffing, professional service and quick response times that our residents have come to expect. He has managed the many facets of the department well, from emergency medical services to hazardous materials response to the lifeguarding of our many beaches. He has strengthened the department's cooperation and coordination with regional, state and federal emergency response partners. Additionally, Chief Freeman has continuously worked to improve the diversity of the department by hiring more female and minority firefighters.

Chief Freeman implemented many important life safety response programs that are integral to the department's operations today. These include Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), the Canine Search Program, a 24-hour Health Hazardous Materials Division, and the Firehawk Helicopter Program.

Mr. Speaker, as Members of the Los Angeles County delegation, we would like to personally acknowledge and commend P. Michael Freeman for his dedication to the people of Los Angeles. He is a model of the brave, honorable and selfless public servant that is displayed every day by the men and women of the Los Angeles County Fire Department. We are privileged to have worked with Chief Freeman. We ask the House to join us in congratulating Chief Freeman on his many years of service and wish him much success in his future endeavors.

Members who signed: GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, KAREN BASS, HOWARD L. BERMAN, JANE HARMAN, HOWARD P. MCKEON, LAURA RICHARDSON, LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD, ADAM B. SCHIFF, MAXINE WATERS, DAVID DREIER, XAVIER BECERRA, JUDY CHU, KEVIN MCCARTHY, GARY G. MILLER, DANA ROHR-ABACHER, LINDA T. SANCHEZ, BRAD SHERMAN, HENRY A. WAXMAN.

**HONORING R.C. ALEXANDER**

**HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 17, 2011*

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, business leader Peter Drucker believes, "whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision." Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell you of one successful businessman who lived Drucker's mantra. Born on a working farm in Williamson County, Alexander built an automotive empire in Middle Tennessee. Through humble beginnings to a sprinting end, R.C. Alexander spent his life developing a strong sense of business, family, and community.

Starting with nine employees and single gas station in Murfreesboro, TN, R.C. Alexander grew Alexander Automotive into 22 locations throughout Franklin, Columbia, Murfreesboro, Dickson, and Cookeville. Built upon the tenants of hard work, dedication to community, and straightforward business models, Alexander Automotive maintained almost 1,000 employees at the time of R.C. Alexander's death. He led not only generations of his own family to excellence, but taught those in his influence of the straightforward business practices that brought him success.

Through service to his community, fidelity to his mission, and dedication to his family, Alexander leaves a behind a lasting tribute to his ideals. I ask my colleagues to join with me in celebrating the legacy of Mr. R.C. Alexander.

**OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL  
DEBT**

**HON. MIKE COFFMAN**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 17, 2011*

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, today our national debt is \$14,129,889,690,377.50.

On January 6, 2009, the start of the 111th Congress, the national debt was \$10,638,425,746,293.80.

This means the national debt has increased by \$3,491,463,944,083.70 since then.

This debt and its interest payments we are passing to our children and all future Americans.

**TRAGEDY IN KHOJALY,  
AZERBAIJAN**

**HON. BILL SHUSTER**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 17, 2011*

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, as the Co-Chairman of the House Azerbaijan Caucus, I rise today to bring attention to the tragedy that took place in Khojaly, Azerbaijan, a town and townspeople that were destroyed on February 26, 1992.

Sadly, today there is little attention or interest paid to the plight of Khojaly outside of Azerbaijan. However, one of our greatest strengths as elected officials is the opportunity to bring to light truths that are little known and command recognition. As a friend of Azerbaijan, I am proud to remind my colleagues that we must never forget the tragedy that took place at Khojaly.

At the time, the Khojaly tragedy was widely covered by the international media, including the Boston Globe, Washington Post, New York Times, Financial Times, and many other European and Russian news agencies.

Khojaly, a town in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, now under the control of Armenian forces, was the site of the largest killing of ethnic Azerbaijani civilians. With a population of approximately 7,000, Khojaly was one of the largest urban settlements of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

According to Human Rights Watch and other international observers the massacre was committed by the ethnic Armenian armed forces, reportedly with the help of the Russian 366th Motor Rifle Regiment. Human Rights Watch described the Khojaly Massacre as "the largest massacre to date in the conflict" over Nagorno-Karabakh. In a 1993 report, the watchdog group stated "there are no exact figures for the number of Azeri civilians killed because Karabakh Armenian forces gained control of the area after the massacre" and "while it is widely accepted that 200 Azeris were murdered, as many as 500–1,000 may have died."