

HONORING PRINCE GEORGE'S  
COUNTY FIREFIGHTERS**HON. DONNA F. EDWARDS**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 8, 2012*

Ms. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the Prince George's County Fire and EMS Department and to firefighters across this country who are committed every day to keep our communities safe by putting their own lives at risk during times of our greatest need. They each have made the ultimate contribution to our communities—the contribution of personal sacrifice to ensure our safety and well-being.

On February 24, 2012, a house fire in Riverdale Heights, MD, took an unexpected turn for the worse. The Prince George's County firefighters advanced into the home searching for victims. High winds that Friday night are believed to have caused a sudden rush of fresh air into the home, creating a "fireball" that engulfed the firefighters on the first floor and forced the crews to evacuate the structure.

Unfortunately, seven firefighters from three Maryland Volunteer Fire Departments were in-

jured, transported, and treated at MedStar Washington Hospital Center. Six of those injured have been released, with one still remaining at Washington Hospital Center's burn unit. On behalf of the citizens of the Fourth Congressional District, I want to send my appreciation to these individual firefighters and all their colleagues for their relentless dedication to public service. I would also like to recognize the paramedics and the doctors and nurses at the Washington Hospital Center for their compassionate care and treatment these firefighters received.

I would like to discuss briefly each of these brave men:

Firefighter Kevin O'Toole, 22 years old, a member of the Bladensburg Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad remains hospitalized in stable but critical condition with burns over 50% of his body;

Firefighter Ethan Sorrell, 21, of the Bladensburg Fire Department sustained burn injuries to his airway and was released last week;

Firefighter Michael McClary, 19, a member of the Riverdale Volunteer Fire Department suffered injuries to his ribs and burns to both hands and was hospitalized overnight before being released;

Firefighter Michael Olszewski, 22, of the Riverdale Fire Department sustained burns to the side of the face and was treated and released that same evening;

Firefighter Roberto Ramirez, 21, of the Riverdale Fire Department suffered ear burns and was treated and released that same evening;

Firefighter Michael Naples, 24, of the Riverdale Fire Department sustained ear and face burns and was treated and released that same evening; and

Assistant Chief Ari Schloss, 36 years of age, of the College Park Volunteer Fire Department suffered burns to the hands and was treated and released that same evening.

I have seen firsthand how difficult a job our local firefighters have. They are tasked with the tremendous responsibility of meeting the increasingly diverse needs of growing populations with diminishing resources. Today, our first responders are being asked to be the first line of defense in our war on terror, in addition to carrying out traditional fire and public safety work.

I want to thank them for their commitment to the citizens and families of this great State. They are Maryland's heroes, and they have my utmost respect and support.