

on many of the institute's committees. He also received the Chapter Activities Award from ACI in 2003. As a member, of the board of direction for the Louisiana chapter—ACI, he received its Chapter Activity Award in 2004 and its Chapter Distinguished Member Award in 2010. His service has also been recognized in his selection as vice chair of the ACI Fall 1996 Convention and co-chair of the ACI Fall 2009 Convention.

Mr. President, I am honored to ask my colleagues to join me today to recognize Mr. William E. Rushing Jr.'s leadership and service to the American Concrete Institute.●

REMEMBERING RAFAEL GARCIA

● Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I would like to speak to you about the loss of a remarkable young man who made a tremendous impact on my community.

This week, the city of Miami lost a firefighter, a devoted husband, an expectant father, and a selfless public servant named Rafael Garcia when he died very suddenly from a brain tumor that was detected just days ago.

Rafael, known as Ralf, was only 28 years old. He is remembered by the many who loved him as brilliant, driven, and selfless, and the all-too-brief record of his life confirms all three traits. He graduated salutatorian from Christopher Columbus High School in 2005. He chose to attend Florida International University to stay close to his family and the community he loved and went on to graduate summa cum laude as the only student in his class to have a perfect GPA.

With Ralf's natural gifts, he could have chosen virtually any career path—including jobs that would have paid lucrative salaries and kept him far from danger—but instead he chose to apply his considerable talents to serving his neighbors as a firefighter and EMT. So after graduation, he worked as a math teacher while attending Coral Springs Fire Academy, from which he graduated first in his class. He was then so eager to get started that he camped outside for 3 days so he could be first to submit his application for an opening. After winning that position, he attended Miami Fire Academy, where he once again graduated first in his class and won the award of Outstanding Recruit.

As a firefighter, Ralf was more than just a hero who rushed into infernos while others fled; he also served our community in smaller moments, protecting the little pieces of this country that make America home. It is firefighters like Ralf who place a rescued teddy bear in the arms of a scared child. It is firefighters like Ralf who extinguish a blaze before it destroys the business a man worked his whole life to build. It is firefighters like Ralf who save a young mother from the twisted steel of a car wreck. And it is firefighters like Ralf who help to provide my children—and all children—with the knowledge that they are safe

and that should anything happen, there are men and women ready to blare sirens, stop traffic, and break down walls to get to them if that is what they have to do.

Ralf is remembered as a “firefighter's firefighter.” Many children grow up dreaming of becoming firefighters, and many who achieve this dream aspire to be a firefighter like Ralf.

His supervisor, Lieutenant Christopher Cope, told the Miami Herald he was “one of those subordinates that you wish you could clone to staff your entire department.”

When his tumor was discovered earlier this month, Ralf was in the process of studying for his lieutenant's exam. Remarkably, with all of his responsibilities as a firefighter and soon-to-be father, Ralf also found time to touch lives in other ways.

He spent any time he could spare tutoring high schoolers in Miami struggling with math and serving as a substitute teacher. His father tells of multiple parents who have reached out this week to express their gratitude for how Ralf helped their children achieve better test scores.

But even with all of his service in life, perhaps the greatest demonstration we have of Rafael Garcia's character is the dignity, love, and selflessness he demonstrated in his final days. A surprise prognosis that would have left many of us bitter and defeated instead brought out what was best in him.

Before he passed, his wife Maeghan wrote on Facebook of his final days when he resolved to donate his organs to others. She wrote, “I truly believe that the only reason he is still holding on is because he knows he will continue to help others even after his passing. In true Ralf fashion, I can just imagine him not wanting to ‘be selfish’ by letting go too soon. That was his nature,” she wrote, “always thinking of others first.”

Miami has lost an irreplaceable member of our community this week in Rafael Garcia, but I know his legacy will live on for many years in the lives of those he touched. Today, Jeanette and I hold in our prayers his wife Maeghan, his-son-to-be-born son, who is due in May, and his parents, Juan and Patricia.●

RECOGNIZING MARUCCI SPORTS

● Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, entrepreneurs and small business owners have a unique skill of seeing what their community is missing and fulfilling that need. As such, these ideas are often conceived through personal experiences and the backyard projects we take on for our children, family, and friends. This week's Small Business of the Week, Marucci Sports of Baton Rouge, LA, was similarly inspired.

Back in 2002, Jack Marucci and his son Gino began studying the wooden bats of their favorite baseball players

so that Gino could pick one to play with in his Little League games. When Jack couldn't find the perfect bat for his son, he decided to craft one in his garage down in southeast Louisiana. Gino's homemade bat quickly became popular around the neighborhood, and Jack picked up orders to produce personalized ones for his son's friends. Shortly thereafter, a Major League first baseman put in an order, as well. As the former Louisiana State University athletic training director, Jack knew a thing or two about proper sports equipment, and Marucci Sports has since grown to be one of Louisiana's top cutting-edge companies for quality baseball and softball products. Today, Marucci Sports continues to provide wood bats to youths learning the game for the first time, as well as to over one-third of the Major League Baseball's players.

Due to Jack's legacy of meticulous attention to detail and quality, Marucci Sports is on the forefront of innovating athletic equipment. Most recently, the company announced the creation of a new smart fabric with the capability to help diagnose head injuries for athletes. In recent years, the long-lasting effects of head injuries, including concussions, have come into the limelight as a serious issue for athletes. In response to those concerns, Marucci Sports developed new BodiTrak's Head Health Network helmets, which are lined with a pressure-mapping fabric designed to track each contact the helmet receives as it happens. If there is particularly strong contact to the head, the helmet will notify the coach or trainer who can then make sure the player is alright. This technology has the potential to prevent generations of folks from developing damaging head injuries and protect future generations of athletes.

It is innovative ideas such as these from Marucci Sports and other small businesses that make our country great. Congratulations again to Marucci Sports for being selected as Small Business of the Week. Thank you for your commitment to safety, creating quality products, and one of Louisiana's favorite past times.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)