

interaction, self-confidence, school attendance, and classroom behavior from the participating students.

These benefits translate academically also, as, on average, Kids' Orchestra students receive 15 percent higher grades than students who do not participate in the program.

The organization also aims to create a strong sense of community between the children from all different backgrounds, different neighborhoods, and different schools. Each class contains 25 students of varying ages, schools, and skill levels, all brought together for weekly lessons and regular performances.

By forming a community based on musical training and enrichment, Kids' Orchestra is making a positive impact on neighborhood schools and individual students.

I am proud to have had this program in Louisiana, and I look forward to seeing the positive impacts from the organization for many, many years to come.

#### CELEBRATING NATIONAL RICE MONTH

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate September as National Rice Month.

Very few places in the world take their rice as seriously as Louisiana, where we produced 2.7 billion pounds of rice just last year.

Rice is also a huge economic driver for the United States, as rice milling operations generate about \$6 billion in wages and business profits, according to the LSU AgCenter.

U.S. rice not only puts food on our tables, but also on tables across the world. We contribute 5 percent of the total rice exports in food aid to developing nations. This is the kind of international contribution our rice producers can be proud of.

In turn, I am proud to represent the hardworking rice farmers across Louisiana. They produce high-quality rice that feeds the world, gives jobs to their neighbors, and helps the community. These facts alone make rice worth celebrating all month long.

#### BATTLING THE WILDFIRES THAT PLAGUE CALIFORNIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, let me start by thanking the thousands of firefighters who, each year, put their lives at risk to battle wildfires like those that have plagued California and other western States. We owe it to them, as well as to the American people, to use every measure available to fight fires in ways that reduce the risk to those firefighters and the risk of losing lives and property among our population.

Just in the last year, and that is in 2018, wildfires in California burned 1,117,000 acres. Nationally, there was 6.5 million acres burned. In California, we

had six fatalities. Nationally, there were 16 fatalities. California property losses were 2,356 houses—those are people's homes—and 1,239 nonresidential buildings.

On that note, today, I would like to draw the attention of my colleagues and the American people to what I consider to be an inexcusable roadblock that is stopping the implementation of new, innovative, and tested effective firefighting technology.

In 2008, I helped secure funding for research and testing of the technology that ultimately became Precision Containerized Aerial Delivery System, or PCADS.

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It was designed specifically for military aircraft, including the C-17s and the C-130s and others as well. It has been tested over the years and proven to deliver massive amounts of water or fire retardant onto fires using GPS and other expertise. It is safer, more accurate, and much more effective than traditional aerial firefighting.

Yet a decade later, this technology has not been put to use despite the Air National Guard's report determining that the PCADS are operationally effective and appropriate for the use of C-130 firefighting aircraft or military aircraft that can be made for firefighting. This has been deemed operational, yet for the last 8 months, while we have lost all of these homes and all of these lives, hundreds of these aircraft, C-130s and C-17s, have sat on the tarmac.

This aircraft was designed for military use, but without modification, can save the lives and homes of American citizens throughout this country who are victimized by wildfires and other types of fires. The primary responsibility of our government is to protect the lives of our people with the best available tools, and it is certainly not doing so.

I include in the RECORD, Mr. Speaker, letters that I have written to the Director of our Air National Guard; to Secretary Mattis, the Secretary of Defense; and to Heather Wilson, the Secretary of the Air Force.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
August 30, 2018.

Lt. Gen. L. SCOTT RICE,  
Director, Air National Guard,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR GENERAL RICE: I draw your attention to our military's bureaucratic inertia that has led to a needless loss of life and a tremendous loss of property. I am referring to the vast damage caused in the Western United States, specifically California, by out-of-control wildfires which have plagued the region for the last few months. This loss of life and property could have been dramatically curtailed had our military acted upon an option that was, and is, readily available.

Our inventory of C-130 and C-17 aircraft, with inexpensive and slight interior modifications, could be used as a major firefighting asset that could make a major difference. Instead, these potential incredible firefighting assets sat as California burned.

Using these aircraft as valuable firefighting assets would not involve any alteration of the aircraft. This option however has been available and ignored.

I call your attention to the Precision Container Aerial Delivery System (PCADS). I helped win Congressional approval in the 2008 appropriations bill wherein \$2.3 million was provided for the research and testing of this system. It is ten years later, and I am frustrated that it has not been used to protect our citizens, our homes, our businesses, and our wildlands.

The Air National Guard determined that PCADS is operationally effective and is appropriate for C-130 firefighting. The final report on PCADS that found it to be a reliable option was released in January 2018, yet seven months later there has been no action taken to deploy the system. During those seven months, we have suffered 109 large fires which have burned 1.9 million acres, caused 16 fire fatalities, and destroyed 2,356 houses. During this time, our C-130's and C-17's equipped with this system could have had a major impact on these fires. This is utterly unacceptable when we have a proven technology that responds faster and delivers massive quantities of water and fire retardant with GPS directed drops in contrast to the status quo. Furthermore, military transport aircraft can be rapidly and easily reloaded with water or fire retardant as compared to any other system. When the American people discover how bureaucratic intransigence has caused such preventable wildfire damage they will be justifiably outraged.

Today, I am demanding that actions be taken upon receipt of this letter to facilitate the use of this simple and inexpensive technology which will easily turn our inventory of C-130's and C-17's into firefighting water and fire-retardant bombers.

I hope you will take this letter seriously enough in order to prevent even more damage in the state of California and elsewhere.

Yours sincerely,

DANA ROHRBACHER (CA 48),  
Member of Congress.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
August 30, 2018.

Hon. JAMES N. MATTIS,  
Secretary of Defense,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY MATTIS: I draw your attention to our military's bureaucratic inertia that has led to a needless loss of life and a tremendous loss of property. I am referring to the vast damage caused in the Western United States, specifically California, by out-of-control wildfires which have plagued the region for the last few months. This loss of life and property could have been dramatically curtailed had our military acted upon an option that was, and is, readily available.

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DANA ROHRABACHER (CA 48),  
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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, August 30, 2018.

Hon. HEATHER WILSON,  
Secretary of the Air Force,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY WILSON: I draw your attention to our military's bureaucratic inertia that has led to a needless loss of life and a tremendous loss of property. I am referring to the vast damage caused in the Western United States, specifically California, by out-of-control wildfires which have plagued the region for the last few months. This loss of life and property could have been dramatically curtailed had our military acted upon an option that was, and is, readily available.

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DANA ROHRABACHER (CA 48),  
Member of Congress.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, I would hope that we would get some support from these leaders who have been appointed by President Trump to protect the American people in any way they can.

Having these airplanes sit on the tarmac in California and elsewhere throughout this country when they could drop fire retardant and massive amounts of fire retardant water saving homes—little cul de sacs that would catch on fire and be destroyed, one flight over those cul de sacs could have saved them.

Thousands of people have lost their lives needlessly because of bureaucratic intransigence in our military, so we are calling on the Air National Guard, the Air Force, and, of course, our Secretary of Defense to unblock this impediment to protecting the lives of our people with U.S. military equipment that can do the job.

#### RECOGNIZING OTHERWISE GIFTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a small business in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, that was recently recognized by the Lansdale Economic Development Committee as Business of the Month.

Otherwise Gifts, located on Green Street, has been a fixture in Lansdale since its opening in 1979. Owner John Otherwise describes his shop as containing unique gifts for everyone. Indeed, Otherwise Gifts sells everything from antiques, woodworking items, lamps, furniture, and nearly everything else John believes would help beautify Lansdale community homes.

A Philadelphia native, John previously worked in construction and in the nuclear industry before deciding to follow his passion and open his own store. At age 77, John continues to offer unique experiences and gifts to citizens of Montgomery County and throughout the region.

I wish John and his wife, Cynthia, all of the best, and I send my congratulations to Otherwise Gifts on being

named Lansdale's Business of the Month.

RECOGNIZING MARY, MOTHER OF THE REDEEMER SCHOOL

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a school in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, that plays a tremendous role in the development of our youngest citizens.

Mary, Mother of the Redeemer School in North Wales has provided educational growth and spiritual guidance since 2003. While the parish community has existed since the church was established in 1987, it is a testament to MMR's parishioners' devotion to their faith and community that a school was ultimately established. It also comes as no surprise that this school has some remarkable achievements.

MMR is a nationally ranked Blue Ribbon, School of Excellence, a recognition of exceptional academic achievement bestowed by the U.S. Department of Education. Earning this award despite its mere 15 years in existence demonstrates the future is tremendously bright for this amazing school.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Mary, Mother of the Redeemer School Principal Denise Judge and all faculty, staff, and parents for facilitating such a wonderful community school. We are grateful for your presence in our community, and we wish you all the best.

RECOGNIZING MONTGOMERYVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a school in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, that plays a pivotal role in the development of our community's youth.

Montgomeryville Elementary, located in North Wales, is known for instilling in its students the value of academic success and the virtues of acceptance and appreciation. These ideas are ultimately culminated into the school's motto: "Dream big. Achieve greatness."

Last year, Montgomery Elementary was ranked the 48th best elementary school in the State of Pennsylvania. This is no small feat, especially given that Pennsylvania contains over 4,000 elementary schools.

These noteworthy milestones would not be made possible without the assistance of a dedicated staff and school community. I am especially grateful for the leadership of principal TJ Seidenberger, who has given Montgomery Elementary the tools they need to thrive and succeed since he took the helm at the school.

We thank Montgomery Elementary for all they do for our community, and we wish them continued success in the future.

RECOGNIZING THE SALVATION ARMY OF GREATER CHATTANOOGA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from