

Each day, we work with a select group of members—allied members so to speak—who understand the cooperative roles of our Nation's fire service and the Federal Government in protecting our communities. They represent both sides of the political aisle. Our efforts are geared towards developing legislation and influencing Federal policies for the betterment of public safety.

Today, we are honoring a true champion of our Nation's fire and emergency services, Congressman Nick Smith. While Congressman Smith represents the 7th district of Michigan, his contributions to public safety go way beyond his Congressional district, impacting the readiness of over 26,000 fire departments, nationwide.

The fire service is greatly indebted to this individual for championing many of our causes. For instance, two years ago, Congress authorized for the first time a major grant program specifically for local fire and emergency services departments. This year, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program was funded at \$360 million. It was through the efforts of Congressman Smith and a select group of colleagues that this program became a reality, enabling thousands of departments to receive funding to help reduce the threat of fire and other dangers within their local jurisdictions.

Operating a fire department is not an easy task. Nor is getting Federal programs established. The grant program was no exception. I'll never forget a meeting I attended two years ago in a Congressional office regarding this program. A number of Congressmen and women were meeting with the OMB Director to express their frustration with the budget proposal which failed to include funding for this program. One of the most vocal members at the meeting was Congressman Smith, who was not shy about expressing his frustration over the lack of funding. Two days later, the OMB Director had a change of heart and placed \$100 million in the budget for this grant program. Everyone at the meeting would agree who made the difference for the fire service that day.

And before this program, Congressman Smith was working to revitalize the mission of the United States Fire Administration. In 1999, a blue ribbon panel charged with reviewing the mission of the Fire Administration issued a report questioning, among other things, an apparent lack of leadership within the Administration. The report included 34 recommendations for improvement.

Much of the problem had to do with a lack of funding—badly needed funding for research, education and training. As Chair of the Basic Research Subcommittee, which has oversight of USFA, Congressman Smith was able to significantly increase the funding authorization, enabling Congress to infuse a financial dose of medicine into the staggering agency.

That same year, I had the honor of attending the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service in Emmitsburg, Maryland, an annual event honoring the sacrifices of those firefighters who fell in the line of duty that year. Congressman Smith delivered the special address. I don't remember any particular thing he said; but what I do recall is that he didn't read from a prepared script, but rather spoke from the heart. You could easily sense Nick Smith's admiration and respect for all first responders.

Congressman Smith is an individual of great character, a man who is truly dedicated to supporting our Nation's fire and emergency services. The events of September 11th have made all of us work a little harder to ensure we are ready for the next attack. In the case of Nick Smith, it has become a passion, an unrelenting mission for which we should all be grateful.

I have just shared with you my observation of Nick Smith in Washington. Now it is my pleasure to turn the microphone over to Chief Victor Hilbert, of the Delta Township Fire Department who will offer some insights into how the Congressman's work has benefited public safety in his own Congressional district.

TRIBUTE TO THE WILKERSON
CHAPEL

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Wilkerson Chapel and the anniversary of its 140 years of service to the community of Collinsville, Illinois.

The people of the Wilkerson Chapel are truly good Samaritans. They have spent 140 years preaching the word of Christ to Collinsville and surrounding areas and participating in other good works.

To such people as Rev. Charles Orr and his congregation, the good deeds themselves are their own best rewards. Yet, on this special day, I think it is appropriate that they are recognized for their efforts. They are good Christians and good Americans, and remind us all of the compassion and energy that makes this country great.

To the people of the Wilkerson Chapel, thank you for all your good works over almost the last century and a half; and may God grant you the opportunity to continue doing His work for many years into the future.

RECOGNIZING STAFF SERGEANT
WINFORD EVANS AS THE RECIPIENT
OF THE DISTINGUISHED
SERVICE CROSS

HON. JO ANN EMERSON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Mrs. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, March 30th, a great soldier and leader was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, 56 years after its authorization.

Sadly, the recipient, SSG Winford Evans, who fought for this country in World War II passed away in 1991. However, the U.S. Army presented the award, along with two others, to his family during a ceremony held in Sikeston, Missouri.

SSG Evans earned the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroic action during a July 1945 battle in the Southwest Pacific Theater. Seeing his platoon leader wounded, SSG Evans disregarded enemy fire and brought the leader to safety. As the battle progressed, he directed mortar attacks and was wounded but continued to fight. Less concerned with his own immediate safety than with defending those around him, he positioned himself within 25 yards of the enemy, threw hand grenades, fired on the enemy and wounded and killed several enemy soldiers.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Cross, SSG Evans was awarded two Bronze Star Medals. The first has an oak leaf cluster and the other one has a "V" device. These

two medals were awarded to SSG Evans for his heroic achievements in the Asian Pacific Theater from 1943–1945.

This May as we take time to celebrate Military Appreciation Month, it seems fitting that we recognize men and women in uniform like SSG Winford Evans. His sacrifice, along with the sacrifice of so many others who stood in harm's way to defend our country, remind all of us of the selfless valor of our military men and women. I am hopeful, particularly during this time of military action abroad, that others will reflect on the service and dedication of those who came before SSG Evans and those who will come after him and hold in their hearts an appreciation and admiration for their actions and desire to secure peace and freedom for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, on this very special occasion, I ask that all of my colleagues join me in recognizing and remembering SSG Evans and extend our best wishes to his family as they remember his service to the United States of America.

EXPRESSING REGRET AND SYMPATHY FOR FAMILIES OF CANADIAN SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN

SPEECH OF

HON. CASS BALLENGER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. BALLENGER. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 412 and offer my sincerest condolences to the families and friends of the four Canadian soldiers who gave their last full measure of devotion in the defense of liberty during Operation Enduring Freedom last month. Eight of their comrades also were wounded in the same tragic incident. They, along with the rest of Canada, are now left to mourn the loss of their fellow patriots.

The tragic event of April 17 should remind all of us that war is dangerous. Service men and women often risk their lives each and every day, so that we may enjoy our freedom and security. These brave Canadians have made the ultimate sacrifice for Canada and for freedom throughout the world. Today, I pray for their families and loved ones.

Canada is not only our neighbor, it has been our closest friend and ally. Soon after the terrorist attacks on September 11, Canadian families selflessly opened their homes to American travelers who were stranded in Canada when American airspace was closed. Since then, Canada has stood, shoulder to shoulder, with its American ally to face the forces of evil in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Despite this tragic accident, Canada and the United States will continue to stand together and fight our mutual enemies until they are vanquished and peace prevails.

Canada, we grieve with you today for your fallen heroes. Their dedication and steadfastness in the face of danger should be a source of pride and comfort. With soldiers like these, I have no doubt that the days of the terrorist are limited and that victory will be ours.

I want to commend my friend and colleague from New York, Mr. HOUGHTON, for this resolution. I urge my colleagues to stand with our