

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

PAYING TRIBUTE TO RICHARD
GONZALEZ

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 24, 2002

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Richard Gonzalez, who has served as the Denver Regional Commissioner of the Social Security Administration since June 1998. Richard Gonzalez's innovative thinking and leadership was pivotal in guiding the Denver Region in improving Social Security services for the American Indians and Alaskan Natives. His retirement marks over thirty-seven years of Federal service and it is my honor to bring forth his accomplishments before this body of Congress and this nation.

Richard Gonzalez began his career with the Social Security Administration as a Computer Programmer in the Bureau of Data Processing in headquarters after serving in the United States Air Force. Prior to coming to Denver, he served as Associate Commissioner for Systems Requirements at SSA headquarters in Baltimore, MD. Richard also held a number of senior level information systems positions with the Social Security Administration and was appointed to the Senior Executive Service in 1994. Under Richard's leadership, Denver led national efforts to improve service delivery to rural communities by piloting outreach efforts in Northern New Mexico and Browning, Montana and partnering with the Chicago Region on a major outreach effort for three reservations in Minnesota.

Richard Gonzalez was recognized for his outstanding service to the public and the Denver Region when he was awarded a prestigious Presidential Rank of Distinguished Executive Award. He serves as the Vice Chairperson on the Denver Federal Executive Board Committee. Richard received his Bachelor of Science Degree from Towson State University and Master of Science Degree from John Hopkins University. He has received numerous citations and awards for his outstanding efforts as Commissioner. His many contributions are appreciated, and his countless hours of devotion have greatly improved the community of Denver and its surrounding areas. Richard is a devoted father and husband, and he cherishes the support and encouragement his family has provided throughout his career. He is married to Dr. Sylvia Simpson, and has two sons, Dan and Mathew.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege that I recognize Richard Gonzalez and his contributions to the City of Denver and this nation. His efforts have greatly helped many people throughout our country and I am proud to recognize him before this body of Congress today. Congratulations on your retirement Richard, and good luck in your future endeavors.

HONORING RETIRING MADERA
POLICE OFFICERS

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 24, 2002

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Madera Police Chief Jerry Noblett, Commander Michael L. Jeffries, Sergeant Leon C. George, Detective Walter Dale Padgett, and Crime Prevention Officer Joe R. Garza on the occasion of their retirement from the Madera Police Department. A retirement celebration will be held for these dedicated individuals on July 20, 2002.

Chief Jerry Noblett's efforts have made a tremendous impact on the Madera Police Department. He began his law enforcement career as a reserve deputy in 1972, and in 1973 he was appointed as a police officer. Jerry obtained a bachelors degree in Criminology from California State University, Fresno. He swiftly moved up the ranks and, in 1977, was promoted to the rank of sergeant in the patrol division. When Chief Colston retired, in July 1997, Jerry was promoted to Chief of Police. Chief Noblett's contributions have been expansive through his career in law enforcement, but Jerry has also served the community by participating on many boards, including the Madera Chamber of Commerce and the Madera Kiwanis.

Commander Michael L. Jeffries began his law enforcement career with Madera in August of 1972. He earned the department's Medal of Valor in 1996 for his bravery in the handling of a barricaded suspect. Sergeant Leon C. George also joined law enforcement in 1972, but began his career in Los Angeles. He joined the Madera Police Department in December of 1984 and has received many commendations for his performance. Police Officer Walter Dale Padgett began his career in October of 1970 with the Madera Police Department. He was chosen as the Police Officer of the Year for the department in 1997. Crime Prevention Officer Joe R. Garza's law enforcement career originated in Fresno in June of 1977. Two years later he joined the Madera team, and has worked on a range of cases, including being the first Crime Prevention Officer in Madera.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate these men on the occasion of their retirement. I invite my colleagues to join me in thanking them for their service to the community and for their valor.

SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES IMPLEMENT WESTERN GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION "COLLABORATIVE 10-YEAR STRATEGY FOR REDUCING WILDLAND FIRE RISKS TO COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT"

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN R. THUNE

OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 22, 2002

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res 352, a resolution expressing the Sense of Congress to fully implement the Western Governors Association "Collaborative 10-year Strategy for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment" and to prepare a National Prescribed Fire Strategy that minimizes risks of escape.

More than 7.4 million acres burned during the 2000 wildfire season—equivalent to a three-mile-wide swath from Washington, D.C. to Los Angeles, California and back—destroying 861 structures, killing 16 firefighters and costing the federal government \$1.3 billion in suppression costs. Upon completion of the 2001 wildfire season, 81,681 fires burned 3,555,138 acres, which threatened rural communities nationwide and killed 15 firefighters. To date, the 2002 fire season has consisted of 50,168 fires burning 3,632,508 acres.

In South Dakota the Black Hills National Forest has had several small fires this fire season. We have been fortunate that firefighters have been able to contain the fires quickly and that very few structures have been burned. However, I am concerned about the future of the Black Hills and the other public lands in the West.

According to the General Accounting Office, "the most extensive and serious problem related to the health of national forests in the interior West is the over-accumulation of vegetation, which has caused an increasing number of large, intense, uncontrollable and catastrophically destructive wildfires. According to the U.S. Forest Service, 39 million acres on national forests in the interior West are at high risk of catastrophic wildfire."

It is clear that this is a result of poor forest management decisions. Because of years of litigation in the Black Hills, the Beaver Park Area of the forest is under high risk of wildfire. The mountain pine beetle epidemic has killed thousands of trees in this area which is fuel for a large crown fire waiting to happen. The Forest Service has had their hands tied by litigation and have not been able to control this problem.

Also, in the Black Hills, the Norbeck Wildlife Preserve is also at risk because of considerable over-growth of ponderosa pine. The dry weather conditions in conjunction with the over-growth is a concern to all that live and work in the Black Hills. This area is only a few

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