

At 4:20 p.m. that day, smoke billowed along the western skyline of the Hudson River as Edgewater first responders rushed to the scene of a 7-alarm fire. Mayor Michael McPartland declared a local state of emergency, and the Edgewater Fire Department fought to control the blaze, which ultimately destroyed 240 of the 408 apartments in the complex. While civilians and first responders reported no serious injuries, hundreds of residents lost their homes, pets, and possessions. Were it not for the quick response of Edgewater's dedicated first responders, there could easily have been loss of life, and property damage would have been far greater.

By the end of the event, 35 departments and agencies from across the region had responded to the call for help. Over 500 police officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and other emergency personnel were on the scene, many of whom stayed until 7 a.m. the next morning. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and honor some of these brave individuals for their fearless service to our community:

Chief of Police William Skidmore, head of the 27-member Edgewater police force, who made sure his officers secured the fire perimeter and controlled crowds, ensuring that both emergency personnel and residents remained at a safe distance.

Emergency Management Coordinator Robert Christiansen, who worked closely with Chief Skidmore to lead coordination efforts among the many county, State, and Federal emergency services that responded to the fire.

Fire Chief Tom Jacobson, who managed the overall firefighting response and coordinated 250 firefighters, 2 fireboats from the Fire Department of the City of New York, 2 Jersey City marine units, and 1 New Jersey State Police boat in fighting the blaze.

First Aid Squad Captain Kathy Frato, who led her team of EMTs in assisting residents and those firefighters who continued to battle the fire into the morning hours.

The firefighters of the Edgewater Volunteer Fire Department, who worked through the night to battle this massive blaze.

All of the first responders of the Edgewater Fire Department, Police Department, and First Aid Squad, in addition to the first responders from the 35 assisting municipalities, who helped to protect life and property. Their courage and commitment to their community is an example to all, and I could not be more grateful for their service.●

CONGRATULATING JOE VENTO

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today, I wish to congratulate Grammy Award-winning musician Joe Vento on receiving the Century Award, an accolade well deserved in recognition of his many sacrifices. Mr. Vento has served both this great Nation and the city of Las Vegas throughout his life and is a true inspiration for all Nevadans.

Mr. Vento's passion for music began at an early age and had him playing the piano and accordion in New York by age 4. He later used his talents in a different setting, bringing the joy of music to those around him in time of war. Mr. Vento was in the U.S. Army Band near the end of World War II and served in World War II, the Korean war, and Vietnam. He received a battlefield commission of three stars from Marine Commandant Lew Walt during his time in Vietnam at a special concert for U.S. troops. Mr. Vento not only deserves recognition for his bravery in serving our country but also for his determination in providing entertainment for those courageously fighting for our freedom alongside him. His actions prove his selflessness and compassion for others.

There is no way to adequately thank the men and women who lay down their lives for our freedoms. I extend my deepest gratitude to Mr. Vento for his courageous contributions to the United States of America. His service to his country and his bravery and dedication earn him a place among the outstanding men and women who have valiantly defended our Nation. As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I recognize that Congress has a responsibility not only to honor these brave individuals who serve our Nation but also to ensure they are cared for when they return home. I remain committed to upholding this promise for our veterans and servicemembers in Nevada and throughout the Nation.

Mr. Vento's service to others did not end on the battlefield. He spent the next 70 years bringing incredible music to the city of Las Vegas. In the 1950s, he began performing with the Three Sons and remained with the group for 27 years. He made numerous appearances on prestigious shows, appeared in command performances at the White House and Imperial Palaces in Tokyo and Beijing, and conducted performances with Victor Borge, Nelson Eddy, and the Veteran Tonight Show Big Band. He also performed at the Paris hotel in Las Vegas. Most recently, Mr. Vento has lent his musical talent to the Royal Resort just off the strip. Mr. Vento's unwavering commitment to the Las Vegas community will never be forgotten. His music will be legend for years to come.

Today, I ask my colleagues and all Nevadans to join me in congratulating Mr. Vento on his award and in recognizing his years of service to both the United States of America and the Las Vegas community. I wish him the best of luck in all of his musical years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO SAM KAPOURALES

● Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I wish to recognize a dear friend, a dedicated public servant and a passionate West Virginia leader, Sam Kapourales, who is celebrating his 80th birthday on

April 19, 2015. After proudly knowing Sam and his lovely wife Dee for more than four decades, it is a special privilege to celebrate Sam's vast achievements and his many years of steadfast service to Mingo County, to West Virginia, and to our Nation.

I have never met anyone more humble, community-minded and family-oriented than Sam. Throughout his 80 years, and still today, Sam has always answered the call of service. At every turn of the road—whether as the mayor of Williamson in Mingo County for nearly 21 years, as the prosperous business owner of Kapourales Properties, as a successful pharmacist or as an invaluable member of countless boards and organizations that focused on helping others and impacting our local communities—Sam has never lost touch with his faith, his family and those in need.

As a devout Mason, Sam has led a life devoted to personal reflection, self-improvement and social betterment. He is a pure, true-blue West Virginian who has shown time after time that he loves his State and the people of West Virginia through his actions of service and philanthropy. For instance, Sam served as president of the Childhood Language Center in Charleston, where children with speech impediments could receive necessary treatments and services.

He also helped recruit much-needed medical services and physicians to the Tug Valley region as a sponsor of the Tug Valley Area Ambulance Service. And as proud Shriner and member of the Beni Kedem Temple in Charleston, even serving a term as Potentate—a true honor indeed—Sam helped raise funds to transport disabled, burnt or sick children to regional medical facilities. Sam and Dee even started a scholarship to provide additional educational opportunities for graduating seniors at Mingo Central High School.

Yet Sam's tireless community efforts do not even begin to stop there. Throughout the years, Sam served as a member on the West Virginia Board of Pharmacy, the West Virginia Health Care Authority Board, and the West Virginia Housing Development Authority Board. He was Director of the First National Bank of Williamson, the First Bank of Charleston, the Summit State Bank, and the Energy Services of America Corporation. He also chaired the advisory board of Southern West Virginia Community College of Nursing.

Because of his passion, discipline, and staunch work ethic, it is no surprise that Sam has been recognized for his community efforts multiple times throughout the years. Yet to Sam, he says that the greatest of honors bestowed upon him is being a recipient of the 33rd Degree of the Scottish Rite, which is only granted for exceptional service to Freemasonry. His entire life, I never knew Sam to turn down participating in worthwhile cause or helping a neighbor in need. And I truly think