

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IRISH-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

SPEECH OF

HON. CAROLYN MCCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 21, 2009

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 254, a resolution recognizing the unique and distinguished role that Irish Americans have played in the history of our nation.

They have provided the backbone of our workforce, enlivened our art and culture, defended our country, and served in this Congress and as President of the United States.

In fact, there isn't an aspect of our nation that hasn't been improved by the efforts of Irish Americans.

Today, almost one in four Americans can trace their heritage back to Ireland.

With such a large and growing population, it is guaranteed that Irish Americans will continue to have a significant impact on our country for generations to come.

I'm proud to stand today with my colleagues, those lucky enough to be Irish American, as well as those who aren't, and honor this group that has been so important to our nation.

HONORING THE STRATFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT AS THEY CELEBRATE THEIR CENTENNIAL ANNI- VERSARY

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 23, 2009

Ms. DeLAURO. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to join the community of Stratford, Connecticut in marking the 100th Anniversary of the Stratford Fire Department. This is a remarkable milestone and a testament to the dedication and commitment of those men and women who devote their professional lives to protecting the Stratford community.

One hundred years ago the town's paid firefighting force was established with the hiring of the first paid fire chief and then volunteer, Allen Judson as well as the merging of two volunteer units, the Mutual Hook and Ladder Company and the Chemical Hose Company. In its earliest years, Chief Judson was the sole paid employee of the Department and he would lead the Department for the next forty-three years. Volunteers were called to emergencies by the ringing of the church bells with Chief Judson coordinating the "bucket brigades," the hand-drawn hook and ladder apparatus, as well as the manually operated water pump. By day the men who worked in Stratford Center responded and by night those who lived within a thousand feet of the Center

responded while horses drew the fire apparatus. Nine years after its establishment, the second paid member of the Department, Assistant Chief William Anthony, was hired and by the 1930s there were more than half a dozen paid members.

Many changes have occurred since those early days of the Department—its responsibilities expanding dramatically and the job becoming more complex and dangerous. Today's 97-member Department staff four stations throughout Town and respond to fires, Haz-mat calls, vehicle extrications, medical calls, as well as plane incidents. Department members also participate in a variety of community activities aimed at fire safety and prevention as well as annual celebrations such as the Memorial Day Parade. The Department does all of this in a Town which today has 50,000 residents, is bordered by eighteen miles of shoreline, is intersected by Interstate 95, the Merritt Parkway, and the Metro-North railroad, and has an airport within its borders.

What makes this centennial celebration even more special is that the proceeds from the parade and festival will benefit the Stratford Professional Firefighters Burn Foundation—a non-profit organization founded in 1999 by the members of the Stratford Fire Department, Local 998 of the International Association of Firefighters to provide economic support to the funding of projects in the areas of fire and burn prevention through education, research, and public awareness programs.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to the men and women who dedicate themselves to the protection of our communities as firefighters. They face risks that few of us can truly comprehend. Each day, they must be ready to perform under intense pressure—literally in life or death situations. For one hundred years, the men and women of the Stratford Fire Department have ensured the health and safety of the Stratford community and I am proud to rise today to pay tribute not only to their rich history but to their outstanding and unwavering commitment to public service.

THE PLASTIC BAG REDUCTION ACT OF 2009

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 23, 2009

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the "Plastic Bag Reduction Act," legislation that will protect our watersheds, and ultimately the marine environment, by reducing a major source of coastal and marine debris, single-use packaging.

Trash in our watersheds interferes with public use and enjoyment of natural resources, can be hazardous to wildlife, and can break down into tiny "microplastics" that enter the food chain, carrying toxins with them. Trash is a serious problem in the Potomac and Anacostia River watersheds, where every year

cleanup efforts retrieve tons of plastic bags and beverage containers.

Much of the trash that reaches major watersheds does not stay in the watersheds—it is washed out to sea and becomes marine debris. Scientists are becoming alarmed about massive "garbage patches" that are building up in nearly all of the world's oceans. The best-known patch consists of an estimated 100 million tons of plastic debris that has accumulated inside a circular vortex of currents known as the North Pacific gyre. It is estimated to be anywhere from 270,000 square miles to almost 580,000 square miles—between six and thirteen times the size of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Eighty per cent of the plastic in these ocean gyres is believed to come from the land.

The debris that chokes our inland watersheds, our coastlines, and the marine environment sickens and kills thousands of animals every year. Over 267 species worldwide have been impacted by plastic bags and other litter through entanglement or ingestion. Scientists are also realizing that the increasing volume of plastic that is slowly decomposing in the world's oceans may present a longterm problem for marine food chains. As plastic items break down, any toxic additives they contain—including flame retardants, antimicrobials, and plasticizers—may be released into the ocean environment. Not only are the components of the plastics themselves entering the food chain, but so are toxic chemicals that attach to the plastic particles because of plastic's molecular tendency to attract oils.

Many of these chemicals may disrupt the endocrine system—the delicately balanced set of hormones and glands that affect virtually every organ and cell. In marine environments, excess estrogen has led to discoveries of male fish and seagulls with female sex organs.

The Plastic Bag Reduction Act encourages consumers to choose reusable bags by imposing a 5 cent tax on single-use carryout bags beginning January 1, 2010. On January 1, 2015, the amount of the tax increases to 25 cents per bag. The tax applies to paper as well as to plastic single-use carryout bags. Of each 5 cents charged to the customer, the retail seller may apply for a tax credit of one cent for carrying out a qualified carryout bag recycling program. Of each 5 cents charged to the customer, one cent will be transferred to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Finally, the bill directs the Comptroller General to conduct a study of the effectiveness of the provisions of the legislation and evaluate whether imposing a tax on other products, such as food wrappers and containers, could reduce the use of those products.

I am also co-sponsoring Congressman MARKEY's "Bottle Recycling Climate Protection Act of 2009." This legislation will impose a 5 cent deposit on beverage containers, which will reduce the number of bottles and cans that end up as trash in oceans and inland watersheds.

Madam Speaker, human health is directly linked to the health of our watersheds and

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