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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE

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wife, Denise and two sons, Harry, age 12, and Gerard, age 10. Brian Fahey leaves behind his wife, Mary and three sons: Brendan, who is 8 years old, and 3-year-old twins, Patrick and James.

John Downing is survived by his wife Anne, his daughter Joanne, age 7, and his son Michael, who is 3. My thoughts and prayers are with these families.

I am humbled by their devotion to public service. Their deaths represent the ultimate sacrifice a person can make for his or her fellow human beings. They died while fighting a fire and it is not hyperbole to say that they died while making America a safer place to live.

I am always saddened to realize that it takes a tragedy like this to bring attention to the needs of fire departments and firefighters nationwide. I hope that their sacrifice will help us realize the impact of firefighters on our daily lives.

Firefighters are almost always the first in a community to respond to a call for help. They are on the scene of traffic accidents and construction accidents. When a natural or man-made calamity strikes—from hurricanes to school shootings to bombings—firefighters are there without fail, restoring order and saving lives.

Unfortunately, fire departments across the Nation struggle to find resources to help keep our communities safe. As the demands placed on fire departments have grown in volume and magnitude, the ability of local residents to support them has been put to a severe test. As a result, towns and cities throughout the country are struggling mightily to provide the resources their firefighters require.

For these reasons I have strongly supported helping localities meet their critical objectives. Communities need more firefighters and community firefighters need the resources to ensure that they have the training and equipment to protect themselves and the public.

Last year we passed an important piece of legislation called the Firefighter Investment and Response Enhancement Act which authorized the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide grants to local firefighters so that they could purchase the equipment they need. Congress appropriated $100 for the program last year and the FEMA has just completed the first grant competition under the program. The demand is extraordinary. FEMA received nearly $3 billion worth of grant applications—that’s 30 times more in requests that is currently available.

No amount of funding can bring back Firefighters Ford, Fahey, and Downing. New fire trucks or better training programs or even more firefighters cannot even begin to compensate for the loss suffered by the people of Queens and the families of these brave men. For their lives, we are forever indebted, and the members of this chamber to say that these men and their families shall not be forgotten. They have sacrificed their lives for us, and for this they deserve no less than the highest degree of honor and respect. We here today cannot compare our own deeds to those of Harry Ford, Brian Fahey, and John Downing, but we can bring honor to ourselves and justice to their memories by keeping them and the needs of the fire service in mind as we perform our own duties.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution and preamble be agreed to en bloc, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 117) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 117

Whereas on June 17, 2001, 350 firefighters and numerous police officers responded to a 911 call that sent them to Long Island General Supply Company in Queens, New York;

Whereas a fire and an explosion in a 2-story building had turned the 128-year-old, family-owned store into a heap of broken bricks, twisted metal, and shattered glass;

Whereas all those who responded to the scene served without reservation and with their personal safety on the line;

Whereas 2 civilians and dozens of firefighters were injured, including firefighters Joseph Vossilla and Brendan Manning who were severely injured;

Whereas John J. Downing of Ladder Company 163, an 11-year veteran of the department and resident of Port Jefferson Station, and a husband and father of 2, lost his life in the fire;

Whereas Brian Fahey of Rescue Company 4, a 14-year veteran of the department and resident of East Rockaway, and a husband and father of 3, lost his life in the fire; and

Whereas Harry Ford of Rescue Company 4, a 27-year veteran of the department from Long Beach, and a husband and father of 3, lost his life in the fire: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) honors John J. Downing, Brian Fahey, and Harry Ford, who lost their lives in the course of duty as firefighters, and recognizes them for their bravery and sacrifice;

(2) extends its deepest sympathies to the families of these 3 brave heroes; and

(3) pledges its support and to continue to work on behalf of all of the Nation’s firefighters who risk their lives every day to ensure the safety of all Americans.

A CALL FOR ACTION

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, a new poll conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation International and released by the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence confirms once again that the American people support sensible gun safety legislation. Eighty-three percent of those polled said they support criminal background checks on all gun purchases at gun shows. Nearly four out of five respondents voiced support for preventing gun dealers from selling guns to anyone who has not passed a background check, even if it takes more than 3 days to complete the check. And more than 8 out of every 10 people polled believe that all guns should be sold with childproof safety locks.

The message here is clear. People are fed up with the reports of gun violence that dominate the front page and the evening news. America wants action.

The Brady Campaign’s poll and countless other studies demonstrate our mandate. The incidents of gun violence that plague our neighborhoods and endanger our children confirm our moral obligation.

We should ignore neither. We cannot let another Congress go by without action. Let’s close the loopholes in our gun laws and remember the 107th Congress as a time when we made America a safer place for our children and grandchildren.

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE REPORT ON DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES PROGRAM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, when the 107th Congress passed the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, TEA–21, there was a vigorous and close debate about whether to convert the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program into a race neutral program helping all small disadvantaged businesses. It troubled many members of both Houses that we lacked basic information about the characteristics of DBEs and non-DBEs and about alleged discrimination in the transportation industry. Consequently, I introduced, with widespread bi-partisan support, an amendment to TEA–21, requiring the GAO to gather the information Congress was missing that is essential to understanding the DBE program. As Congressman Shuster, Chair of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the floor manager for the transportation bill, emphasized during the House debate, the Act’s requirements require a GAO study that would examine whether there is continued evidence of discrimination against small business owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. I believe such a study will lay the groundwork for future reform.”

Three years later, the GAO has produced a comprehensive report on the questions Congress asked it to investigate. This objective, impartial report