

Barre Business College where he majored in finance and accounting.

Mr. Burke served in the U.S. Army, First Armored Division, Fort Hood, Texas, from 1961 to 1963. Mr. Burke has been an active member of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick for 52 years.

President Harry S. Truman was guest speaker at the first Friendly Sons banquet Mr. Burke attended. Mr. Burke is a sustaining member and past president of the organization. He was the recipient of the Man of the Year Award in 1991.

Mr. Burke is a charter member of the Wolfe Tone Luzerne County Division I Ancient Order of Hibernians and is presently chairman of the standing committee. He is a member of the President John F. Kennedy Council 372 Knights of Columbus and its Fourth Degree, serving as comptroller for the past 40 years. He is also a member of the Knights of Columbus Choir.

Mr. Burke is a member of St. Casimir, St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist, and St. Joseph Parish, Pittston, where he serves as an usher and a senior altar server. He is also a member of the parish finance council.

Mr. Burke has been a baseball coach in the West Pittston Little League and a basketball coach for the Wyoming Area Catholic High School.

He has served as chairman of the West Pittston Democrat Organization and he is a former member of the Luzerne County Democrat Executive Committee. He also served as parade chairman for the Pittston Tomato Festival.

Mr. Burke is a member of Fox Hill Country Club and the West Side Social Club, Avoca. After 37 years of employment with Pope and Talbot Company, he served for several years as director of purchasing for Luzerne County, a post from which he retired in 2006.

Mr. Burke and his wife, Nora, are the parents of three children. They also have nine grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, please join me in congratulating Mr. Burke on the occasion of this special honor. Mr. Burke's dedication to family and community has improved the quality of life and highlighted the value of service above self.

HONOR THE LIFE OF LIEUTENANT RAFAEL VAZQUEZ

HON. RON KLEIN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 2008

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Lieutenant Rafael Vazquez of the Palm Beach Fire Rescue. Known as "Ray," this brave firefighter died tragically on Monday, March 3, as a result of a random shooting in West Palm Beach, Florida.

The details of Lt. Vazquez's death are heartbreaking. The 42-year-old lieutenant had just finished eating lunch with his wife, Michele, and their 4-year-old son when, ever the caring parent, Ray decided to go back inside the restaurant to exchange a toy that had come with his child's meal.

It was a fateful decision. Once inside, Ray was met by a deranged gunman, Alburn Edward Blake, who opened fire. When it was over, Lt. Vazquez lay dead and four others were injured. Then Alburn Edward Blake turned the gun on himself.

Ray's life was one of tireless dedication toward protecting his fellow citizens. Formerly a firefighter with the town of Lake Park, he was hired by the Palm Beach Fire Rescue in February 2001 and was promoted to Rescue Lieutenant in January 2007. He had been assigned to Rescue 28 in Royal Palm Beach, Florida. Lt. Vazquez is survived by his wife Michele, an officer with Palm Springs Public Safety, and their 5 children, ages 4–21.

In closing, I think the best way to honor Ray's life in Congress is to let his wife Michele speak for him in her own words. She says, "I don't understand why these horrible things happen. But no horrible thing can take away our memories. My husband was an outstanding father and the most giving husband. He was my best friend; I'm going to miss him so much."

A dedicated firefighter, father, and human being, Lt. Ray Vazquez deserves all the honor and praise this distinguished body can bestow upon him.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FEDERAL LAND ASSISTANCE, MANAGE- MENT, AND ENHANCEMENT ACT (FLAME ACT)

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 2008

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act, or the FLAME Act.

Last year, our country saw the devastating effects of catastrophic, emergency wildland fires in southern California. For the past several years, we have witnessed tragic fire seasons that have put American lives and our treasured public lands in harm's way. Fire seasons are getting longer and more intense due to climate change, drought, and other factors.

As a result, Federal fire suppression spending has increased substantially over the past 10 years and projections appear to indicate that this trend will continue into the foreseeable future.

The dramatic rise in these costs is eroding other nonfire programs and impacting the core mission of the Federal land management agencies. In the case of the Forest Service, for example, wildland fire suppression activities now account for approximately 48 percent of its budget. This year's alarming and irresponsible budget request from the Forest Service, which cuts over half of the funding for State and private forestry, continues the sad trend: our Forest Service is turning into the fire service.

Furthermore, both the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior have had to "Rob Peter to Pay Paul" by borrowing funds from other agency accounts to cover the esca-

lating costs of wildland fire suppression. Last year, for example, the Forest Service spent \$741 million more than was budgeted for wildland fire suppression, and the Department of the Interior spent \$249 million more than was budgeted for wildland fire suppression. And in the case of the Forest Service, the costs of catastrophic, emergency wildland fire suppression activities account for the vast majority of suppression expenditures, as 2 percent of fires account for 80 percent of costs.

Madam Speaker, it is clear that something needs to be done to resolve this problem. That is why today I am introducing the FLAME Act.

The FLAME Act establishes a Federal FLAME fund for catastrophic, emergency wildland fire suppression activities. The FLAME fund would be separate from the budgeted and appropriated agency wildland fire suppression funding and is to be used only for catastrophic, emergency wildland fires. The Federal land management agencies will continue to fund anticipated and predicted wildland fire suppression activities within their annual budgets.

The Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior may declare catastrophic, emergency wildland fire suppression activities eligible for the FLAME fund by issuing a Suppression Emergency Declaration. The declaration will evaluate the size, severity, and threat of the individual wildland fire incident.

The FLAME Act continues our stewardship of all lands by making funds available for catastrophic, emergency wildland fire suppression activities on State and private land consistent with existing agreements. Funds will also be available for catastrophic, emergency wildland fire suppression on Indian lands.

The FLAME Act also requires that the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior submit a long-overdue report to Congress containing a cohesive wildland fire management strategy. This report will improve efforts to prevent fires on our public lands. This report will address critical fire prevention issues such as identifying a system for assessing the level of fire risk to communities, and indentifying a system to ensure that the highest priority fuels reduction projects are being funded first.

Madam Speaker, catastrophic, emergency wildland fires can cause tragic loss of life, and property. I am proud to be joined in introducing the FLAME Act today by my colleagues Mr. NORM DICKS and Mr. RAÚL GRIJALVA. I look forward to working together to ensure that our country has the necessary tools to combat catastrophic, emergency wildland fires.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 2008

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, on March 4, 2008, I was unavoidably detained and was not able to record my votes for rollcall Nos. 88–90.

Had I been present I would have voted: