



Feinstein, Boxer, Bono, Calvert and Lewis Ask President to Move Quickly in Assisting Families of Fallen Firefighters

December 14, 2006

Washington, DC – U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer (both D-Calif.), and U.S. Representatives Mary Bono, Ken Calvert, and Jerry Lewis (all R-Calif.) today announced that they have sent a letter to President Bush urging him to move quickly in signing legislation to assist the families of the firefighters killed in the October 2006 Esperanza fire.

The legislation corrects a tax loophole that has prevented the families from receiving the more than \$1 million donated on their behalf. The bill was introduced in both the Senate and the House on December 8, and passed by unanimous consent before adjournment. It then moved to the President's desk, where it is waiting to be signed into law.

The following is the text of the letter sent on Wednesday, December 13, to President Bush:

Dear President Bush:

We urge you to prioritize consideration of H.R. 6429, and promptly sign it into law.

In October, five federal firefighters were killed in the Esperanza arson fire that raged through Riverside County, California. Following that tragedy, the local United Way chapter raised over \$1 million for the families of the deceased firefighters. Unfortunately, the *Los Angeles Times* reported last Thursday that IRS rules typically prevent 501(c)(3) organizations from raising money for specified individuals – and that the United Way chapter might even risk losing its tax-exempt status if it released these funds. Faced with the prospect of having to return the contributions it had raised, the United Way then asked the California Congressional delegation for help.

Upon learning of this problem, we immediately introduced corrective legislation (S. 4112 and H.R. 6429), which was introduced Friday. These bills were drafted to treat the Esperanza fire victims in the same way as 9/11 victims for whom contributions had been individually raised. In an act of prompt bipartisanship, H.R. 6429 passed both the House and Senate by unanimous consent before our adjournment sine die. Final passage took place in the Senate at 4:30 a.m. Saturday morning.

This bill now heads to your desk for consideration. Although Congress acted with unusual dispatch, the United Way still cannot release these funds to the families of the fallen firefighters until this bill becomes law. With the holidays approaching – the families' first without their loved ones – we ask to you to sign this bill into law promptly, so that the outpouring of support from various donors can finally flow to the families of these heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice.

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