

Becker is survived by his wife Crystal and daughters Cierra and Cheyenna; his mother and stepfather, Deborah and Bob Jorgensen, his father and stepmother, Joe and Jean Becker; sister Brooke Jorgensen; stepsister Nichole Becker; and stepbrothers Chris Becker, Adam Becker, Matt Jorgensen and Chris Jorgensen.

Madam Speaker, I am grateful for Mr. Becker's selfless service to our Nation. I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing a man worthy of our honor, Mr. Shane Becker.

VETERANS GUARANTEED BONUS
ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 17, 2007

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3793, the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act. I am proud to cosponsor this important, bipartisan legislation which will ensure that members of the Armed Services who are discharged as a result of combat-related wounds receive the full compensation to which they are entitled.

H.R. 3793 was prompted by the recommendations of the Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors, co-chaired by former Senator Bob Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala. It will reverse a Department of Defense rule that unfairly penalizes wounded soldiers and prohibits them from receiving their full enlistment bonuses.

While facing the threat of a hostile enemy, our veterans have too often returned home to find more trouble: gaps in health care services, limited educational assistance, problems finding employment and a lack of support for their families. Too often, our brave military men and women find that while they have been willing to serve their country, their country is not ready to serve them. We can take an important step in reversing that trend by ensuring that veterans receive all the pay for which they are entitled.

According to Department of Defense rules, enlistees cannot receive their full enlistment bonus unless they fulfill their entire military obligation. Unfortunately, members of the Armed Services who are wounded while on active duty are not receiving their full bonuses because their service was prematurely cut short. The Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act will correct this problem by requiring the Department of Defense to provide veterans who have been discharged due to combat-related wounds with full payment of remaining bonuses within 30 days of discharge. This will ensure that America's wounded warriors receive the full compensation promised to them.

These wounded veterans have earned their bonuses by answering the call to service. Now is the time to heed the recommendation of the Dole-Shalala Commission and fix this problem.

I would like to thank Congressman JASON ALTMIRE for introducing this legislation and Chairman BOB FILNER for prioritizing the health and well-being of the Nation's veterans.

RECOGNIZING MATTHEW J. ROBERTS FOR ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Matthew J. Roberts, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Matthew has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Matthew has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Matthew J. Roberts for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

WILDLAND FIRE SAFETY AND
TRANSPARENCY ACT

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing a bill to promote wildland firefighter safety and facilitate agency and congressional oversight of the Federal agencies' wildland firefighter safety practices and policies.

The legislation is identical to a bill introduced by Senator CANTWELL and cosponsored by my Colorado colleague, Senator KEN SALAZAR. That measure (S. 1152) has been favorably reported from the Senate's Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and I am introducing a House companion to assist in securing enactment of the legislation.

The bill would require Interior Department agencies and the Forest Service to provide Congress with an annual joint report on their wildland firefighter safety practices, including training programs and activities for wildland fire suppression, prescribed burning, and wildland fire use.

This will encourage greater focus in the agencies and can assist in our oversight of these important agency activities.

Ensuring timely and sufficient information on the agencies' safety practices and policies is critical to such oversight. For example, the Federal agencies currently do not specifically track the portion of their wildfire-related funding that is expended for wildland firefighter safety and training, making oversight of safety program funding difficult.

Madam Speaker, wildland firefighting has long been a dangerous activity, as shown by a report from the National Wildfire Coordinating Group listing 945 fatalities resulting from wildland fire accidents since 1910. And while evidently from 1910 until the late 1970s and early 1980s, the number of Federal wildland fire fatalities was trending downward, but that trend has reversed, with the number

of Federal fatalities slowly increasing since then.

This disturbing trend reflects the fact that in recent years wildfire behavior has become more extreme, the wildland-urban interface has grown rapidly, and the number and size of wildfires has increased significantly. Despite improvements in wildfire fighting technologies, these and other factors combine to make wildland firefighting more complex today than ever before.

The 1994 deaths of fourteen Forest Service firefighters on Storm King Mountain in Garfield County, Colorado, followed by four more deaths in the Thirtymile Fire in 2001, two in the Cramer Fire in 2003, five in the Esperanza Fire in 2006, and many others, particularly highlight the need for continual improvement in and oversight of safety policies and practices.

A number of recent reports have identified serious concerns with the agencies' safety practices. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration found "serious and willful" violations of safety standards by the Forest Service in its investigation of Thirtymile Fire fatalities, noting that a number of them were similar to failures which occurred at the Storm King Mountain fire. It also found willful, serious and repeated violations of safety regulations during its investigation of the Cramer Fire.

The agencies' growing reliance on contract wildfire fighting crews also has presented safety challenges. A report by the Department of Agriculture's Office of Inspector General (Report No. 08601-42-SF, March 2006) identified significant problems with oversight and administration of the Forest Service contracts and agreements for these private crews. The report's "findings confirm the need to address serious control weaknesses with respect to the firefighting contract crews," which led the Inspector General to recommend, among other things, improving oversight of contract crews' qualifications and training.

These and other reports highlight the need for Congress and the Federal agencies to improve oversight in the area of wildfire safety. The agencies indicated at a recent Committee oversight hearing on wildfire that they are working on making some major changes to their training and other safety programs, which further highlights the need for Congress to keep abreast of the agencies' wildfire safety program.

This legislation is intended to assist in that effort, and I think it deserves the support of all our colleagues.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION
TO CODIFY TITLE 51, U.S. CODE

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, Ranking Member LAMAR SMITH and I are introducing a bill to codify into positive law as title 51, United States Code, certain general and permanent laws related to national and commercial space programs. It was prepared by the Office of the Law Revision Counsel as part of its functions under 2 U.S.C. 285(b).

This bill is the successor to H.R. 3039, introduced in the 109th Congress. It has been updated to include provisions enacted after the