

By Congressman David Price in Raleigh, NC

I am honored to be here today to join in honoring the sacrifices of North Carolina's firefighters. This annual event and this memorial provide our community the opportunity to give thanks to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, and to their families.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my service in Congress, most recently in chairing the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, has been the opportunity it has given me to know our states' and our nation's firefighters better and to work with their organizations to enhance support for those on the front lines in protecting our communities.

Firefighting is, by its very nature, a dangerous line of work, but there is much we can do and must do to reduce the risks and enable firefighters to do their jobs both more effectively and more safely. That is why the FIRE grants for state-of-the-art equipment are so important. That is why the SAFER grants for training are so important. That is why we must solidify and strengthen the firefighting partnership among federal, state and local governments. I am determined that the federal government hold up its end of that bargain.

We are asking our firefighters to address many new threats, not only a terrorist attack, but many new production processes and facilities which use complicated and dangerous chemicals. Witness the Apex EQ fire in our area two years ago. We need to make sure firefighters know what is in such facilities and are equipped and trained to deal with whatever is there. Our goal is to protect our communities and also to have fewer fallen firefighters, fewer grieving families and colleagues.

We know, however, that there will always be danger, and that firefighting will always require an uncommon measure of courage and sacrifice. We honor you for that today as we lead citizens across North Carolina in expressing profound respect and gratitude to all of you on the front lines and to the families of the fallen.