
CAPITOL CONNECTION

A Weekly Update of News and Views
For Opinion Shapers and Policy Makers

Congressman Gary G. Miller
42nd District, California



April 4, 2008

Homeland Security Waives Laws Hindering Construction of Border Fence

This week, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) authorized the waiver of certain laws to expedite security improvements along the southwest border and speed completion of the border fence. The waiver applies to certain environmental and land management laws that have so far slowed deployment of additional pedestrian and vehicle barriers, towers, sensors, and detection equipment along the border. In 2005, Congress gave DHS the authority to waive these laws if necessary in order to expedite construction of the border fence. As of March 17, there were 309 miles of fencing in place, leaving 361 miles still to be completed by year end. Of those remaining miles, 267 were being held up by federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Congressman Miller applauds DHS for removing these unnecessary restrictions on the border fence and he will continue working with his colleagues in Congress to secure our nation's borders.

House Approves Legislation to Improve Firefighter Training

This week, the House unanimously passed legislation reauthorizing a range of firefighter training programs. In particular, the measure provides for enhanced leadership, coordination, and support services for fire prevention and control; firefighter training and education; and emergency medical services activities. The measure comes just months after Southern California experienced wildfires that burned more than half a million acres, destroyed more than 2,000 homes, and resulted in the largest evacuation in California history. Given the constant fire danger faced by Southern California, Congressman Miller is keenly aware of the need for adequately trained first responders to act when wildfires threaten to destroy our homes and communities. He strongly supported this measure because he believes it will further efforts to train our first responders to deliver emergency services quickly and effectively.

Congressman Miller Announces Fire Safety Grants for Orange County

Following devastating wildfires last year, Congressman Miller this week announced a pair of grants worth a total of \$282,575 for the Inter-Canyon League Fire Safe Council. The purpose of the grants is to help the communities of Orange County prepare for and prevent disastrous wildfires in the future. In particular, these grants will enable the Fire Safe Council to work with private property owners to make risk assessments of their property and remove hazardous vegetation and other fire dangers. The grants will also go toward a public outreach campaign designed to educate residents of Orange County's canyons in how to reduce hazards to their property and personal safety both before and after a fire has occurred. Congressman Miller applauds the Fire Safe Council for their efforts to prevent dangerous wildfires in our region. Now that the smoke has cleared, he believes it is critical that we take the lessons learned from this most recent round of fires and use them to improve our response to future natural disasters.

Medals Awarded to Australian Vietnam Veterans

Earlier today, the United States Embassy in Australia awarded Air Medals to 127 Royal Australian Air Force veterans for their service during the Vietnam War. These individuals bravely contributed to the tactical air mission of the United States Air Force in Southeast Asia between 1964 and 1972. Their service, however, went unrecognized by the United States government. When the issue was raised by retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Eugene Rossel, a resident of the 42nd District, Congressman Miller contacted the United States Air Force. Following a several year process, the Air Force finally approved the recognition these veterans deserve. Congressman Miller would like to thank these distinguished individuals for their service and Lieutenant Colonel Rossel for his efforts on their behalf. If you or a loved one have been awarded a United States military medal but misplaced it or never received it, please do not hesitate to contact Congressman Miller's Brea office at (714) 257-1142 for assistance.