

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

December 12, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

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.

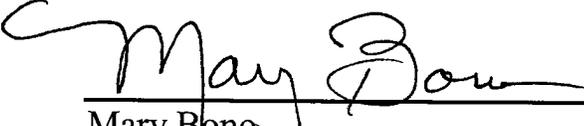
Upon learning of this problem, we immediately introduced corrective legislation (S. 4112 and H.R. 6429), which was introduced Friday. These bills were drafted to treat the Esperanza fire victims in the same way as 9/11 victims for whom contributions had been individually raised. In an act of prompt bipartisanship, 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.

Sincerely,

  
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

  
Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator

  
Mary Bono  
Member of Congress

  
Ken Calvert  
Member of Congress

  
Jerry Lewis  
Member of Congress