

WASHINGTON, DC - Major Carla Blue, a Prince George's County Firefighter, joined House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and the Congressional Women's Caucus this morning on Capitol Hill to talk about the devastating effect of the Bush and House Republican budgets on women and their families. Major Blue was invited to Capitol Hill by Congressman Steny Hoyer who represents a large part of Prince George's County.

"Major Carla Blue is just one of the many female first responders in our community who are on the frontlines protecting our children and our families," said Congressman Hoyer. "We are certainly proud and grateful to her for the work she is doing, and for the work of our female nurses, police officers and first responders do on behalf of Marylanders every day."

"The budgets proposed by President Bush and Congressional Republicans do not meet the needs or match the priorities of Marylanders, especially our women and families," Hoyer added. "The President's budget instead reduces funding for child care and education, cuts funding for programs that will make health insurance more affordable, and slashes funding for grant programs that provide resources and training to our first responders."

"Life safety starts with prevention," said Major Carla Blue. "Financial support is the first responder's life line. The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program helps support our need for quality training, communication, equipment, and human resources. The proposed 33% cut to the current \$750 million funding, will adversely impact the Fire Service's ability to sustain current programs and seek additional opportunities to train employees, purchase new equipment and supplies, and educate the public on fire and emergency prevention. Every day first responders lay their lives on the line while heavily depending on blind faith in elected officials to do their part through unwavering support."

"The proposed budget cut will severely compromise the safety of first responders and the public," added Major Blue. "Today's reality of imminent and unpredictable danger, makes it more critical now than ever before, to maintain current levels of readiness and financial support while striving to increase funding to meet the \$3 billion in requests for prevention, response and mitigation resources. These items are critically necessary to fully protect and serve millions of citizens and residents who depend on the knowledge, skills and ability of first responders during their times of distress."

"Public trust and safety is in our hands. Please help us answer the call in the safest manner possible. Ronald D. Blackwell, Fire Chief, Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department, also

expresses his concern for ongoing financial and congressional support and thanks Congressman Hoyer for his commitment and interest in the Nation's Fire Service," added Major Blue.

Congressman Hoyer, a leader in the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, sent a letter to President Bush urging him to reconsider his decision to significantly reduce funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. In his fiscal year 2005 budget, the Bush Administration proposes reducing the \$750 million grant program by one-third, for a cut of \$250 million dollars.

Mr. Hoyer stated in the letter, "Considering that nearly \$3 billion in applications were submitted for the current program year, and also taking into account the recent Council on Foreign Relations report which highlighted the underfunding of our fire departments, a \$250 million reduction in funding is unacceptable."

The Administration's budget contains harmful cuts to federal investments that Maryland families, workers and first responders would be forced to absorb. Democrats will offer an alternative 2005 Budget, which will reflect America's priorities and mainstream values and gets our fiscal house in order.

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