

Last August, the Princeton First Aid and Rescue Squad was called to investigate a vehicle submerged in raging floodwaters from Tropical Storm Irene. Following good rescue procedure, Michael Kenwood, a 39-year-old volunteer emergency medical and rescue technician, entered the water in an attempt to reach the stranded vehicle. He lost his footing, fell into the current, and drowned – leaving behind a wife and a three-year-old daughter. The submerged car turned out to be empty.

Michael's death was a tragedy. But what compounded this tragic situation was the fact that, under current law, Michael's family was not eligible for federal death benefits because he was a volunteer member of a non-profit organization. This is just wrong. When he was called to enter those floodwaters, Michael did not stop to think, "I don't get paid for this – should I do this?"

Last week, the House passed legislation that I cosponsored to expand federal benefit programs to the women and men like Michael who volunteer for fire departments and rescue squads. Quite simply, it is the right thing to do.

Keeping the Promise to Those Who Served

Even for federal emergency workers and soldiers who are guaranteed benefits by law, sometimes – whether due to oversight or administrative error – those benefits are not provided as promised. In these cases, I often can help.

Recently, a Trenton widow contacted me because, even after many months of effort, she had not received the veterans' benefits she was due as a result of her late husband's service. I intervened on her behalf with the VA Pension Center in Philadelphia, and she soon began receiving her pension of \$684 per month.

If you or someone you know has encountered problems with your VA or other federal benefits, please let me know by calling 1-87-RUSH-HOLT or sending an e-mail at <http://holt.house.gov/contact>

Caring for American Flags

Over the Independence Day holiday, you may have noticed that you own a flag that is no longer suitable for display. If so, please show respect for our flag and for the soldiers who defend it, and take it for proper disposal to one of many American Legion posts or to my office in West Windsor:

50 Washington Road
West Windsor, New Jersey 08550

If you need a replacement U.S. flag, or an entirely new flag, I would be pleased to help you acquire at cost a flag that has flown over the U.S. Capitol. More information is [available online](#)

Sincerely,

Rush Holt
Member of Congress