

**Roxanne Warneke
c/o Dan Klement
Golder Ranch Fire Department
3885 East Golder Ranch Drive
Tucson, AZ 85739**

August 14, 2013

Dear Governor Brewer:

On a morning five weeks ago in Prescott, you offered kind and compassionate words in memory of my late husband, Billy Warneke, and 18 of his fellow Granite Mountain Hot Shots. You spoke of Billy and his fellow wildland fire fighters as “the brave 19,” public servants “who carried out their duties with honor.” You were eloquent that day and your words were of great comfort to me and to Billy’s family. Even more to the point, you summed up my husband and his fellow hot shots with perfect accuracy.

My husband was, as you put it, “a great man” – strong, yet kind; humble, yet with a deep sense of pride in his work, family and community. Billy served four years as a United States Marine, including a tour in Iraq. He exhibited the same Marines’ zeal in April of this year, when he went to work with the Granite Mountain Hot Shots as a seasonal fire fighter.

Billy was thrilled to work alongside the best of the best – and he was determined to do whatever he could to be among the best of that supremely talented crew.

That was my husband and my best friend in a single sentence: Fierce, loyal, giving, with the sturdiest backbone of any human being I have ever met. Billy may only have lived 25 years, but he made the best of every single day God gave him.

This December, I will give birth to our daughter, a little girl who I pray will have her father’s gifts and talents. I will do everything in my power to ensure that our baby girl grows up to walk in her father’s footsteps, with Billy’s dignity and grace.

I hope that you will help me in this regard.

As you surely know by now, only six of the Granite Mountain Hot Shot fire fighters were permanent employees of the City of Prescott. Because our husbands were hired as seasonal fire fighters, my family and 12 other families will not receive the same pension benefits or the same health insurance benefits

as the survivors of the City's permanent employees. The difference is substantial, hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of a lifetime.

House Speaker Andy Tobin has been drafting legislation meant to address this difference, to treat my husband and each of his 18 fellow fire fighters as the public has treated us – with no regard for employment status, but with the utmost respect for the total sacrifice given by those 19 brave men. Like the many compassionate souls who have reached out and supported us, fire lines, too, make no distinction by time card or by paper in an employment file. My husband and his fellow hotshots each toed the line equally. Each man equally made the same ultimate sacrifice, and each family merits equal benefits in the aftermath of that sacrifice.

Governor, I hope you will support this legislation to provide fair and equal posthumous benefits for each of the Granite Mountain Hot Shot families. And I hope you will go the extra mile by calling the Arizona Legislature into a special session to address this issue. I understand how much I am asking, but I'm compelled by the ticking clock: I am nearly six months pregnant as you read this, and without the health insurance benefits this legislation would grant me, I may well be forced to pay tens of thousands of dollars in hospital bills out of my own pocket. Additionally, on the day our baby daughter is born, she will have no health insurance coverage whatsoever.

Thank you so very much for reading my letter, for taking to heart my request and for your words at the public memorial service in early July. Every word you spoke that day resonated with me, just as Billy's commitment to his fellow fire fighters and his community have resonated with so many Americans.

Please, if you have any questions, feel free to contact me. And again, thank you for your leadership.

Best,

Roxanne Warneke