

**GOOD AFTERNOON LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

**FIREFIGHTER RAMIREZ, THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTRODUCTION AND FOR LEADING US IN THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.**

**LET ME BEGIN BY EXPRESSING MY GRATITUDE TO RET. CHIEF MIKE OPALKA FOR DELIVERING SUCH A TOUCHING INVOCATION...**

**AND TO THE MEMBERS OF THE HONOR GUARD FOR PRESENTING THE COLORS...**

**STATE REPRESENTATIVE NUÑEZ, COMMISSIONERS, CHIEF DOWNEY, UNION PRESIDENT CRUZ, MR. TYSON... THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING HERE FOR SUCH A MEANINGFUL CEREMONY.**

**I AM PLEASED TO BE HERE THIS AFTERNOON WITH ALL OF YOU AS WE REMEMBER THE SACRIFICE MADE BY OUR BRAVE FIREFIGHTERS.**

**AS SOME OF YOU MAY KNOWN, I BEGAN MY CAREER AS A FIREFIGHTER, AND I HAD THE HONOR OF SERVING AS FIRE CHIEF TO THE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE CITY OF MIAMI FIRE DEPARTMENT.**

**DURING MY 25 YEARS OF SERVICE WITH THE FIRE DEPARTMENT, I WAS ALWAYS STRUCK BY THE LEVEL OF SERVICE, DEDICATION, AND SHEER HEROISM SHOWN BY OUR FIREFIGHTERS.**

**BY GATHERING HERE TODAY, WE RECOGNIZE THIS REALITY THAT FIREFIGHTERS FACE EVERY DAY.**

**AND WHEN LOOKING AT THIS DISPLAY... LET US ALL REMEMBER THAT EACH OF THESE PAIRS OF BOOTS...**

**EACH OF THE NAMES... THEY ALL REPRESENT REAL MEN AND WOMEN... WITH FAMILIES WHO GRIEVE THEIR LOSS... AND A COMMUNITY WHO IS ETERNALLY GRATEFUL FOR THEIR SACRIFICE, BRAVERY AND COMMITMENT.**

**IN ALL THESE NAMES DISPLAYED HERE BEFORE US IS A LONG HISTORY OF PLACING SERVICE AND DUTY ABOVE SELF... INCLUDING MAKING THE GREATEST POSSIBLE SACRIFICE.**

**SOME OF THESE HEROES DIE ON THE LINE OF DUTY, OTHERS DIE WITH THEIR BOOTS OFF. IF YOU LOOK AROUND, MANY OF THESE FIREFIGHTERS HAVE FALLEN VICTIM TO A SILENT KILLER, CANCER.**

**HERE IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY WE WISH WE COULD CHANGE THOSE STATISTICS... BUT TODAY, WHAT WE CAN MUST CERTAINLY DO IS HONOR THE LIVES OF 50 MIAMI-DADE FIRE RESCUE FIREFIGHTERS AS PART OF “FIRE-FIGHTER MEMORIAL MONTH.”**

**LET US ALWAYS REMEMBER THEIR SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY...**

**AND MAY GOD BLESS THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

**THANK YOU!**

