

Remarks of Congressman Steve Rothman Commemorating the Third Anniversary of the September 11th Terror

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Hackensack, NJ - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) today released the following remarks commemorating the third anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks.

"Three years ago today our nation was changed forever. It was on that day when nearly 3,000 of our fellow Americans were murdered in an unprecedented act of terror against our country and our beliefs of freedom and democracy. It is a day that is forever seared into our minds, with terrible images of despair and tragedy that we will always carry with us. We will never forget our fallen loved ones, friends, and neighbors - all of whom were part of our American family. They will always be in our hearts and prayers.

"As the tears of sorrow and anger flowed that day from the eyes of millions upon millions of Americans, from coast to coast, a sense of belonging, pride, and love of our country swelled also. In the days after the September 11 attacks, American flags were raised outside of homes in every single town in this country. I distinctly remember driving down streets throughout my congressional district and seeing that red, white, and blue flag waving from outside the doorsteps of virtually every house. I had never seen anything like that before. Many homes in my district, including mine, still fly an American flag.

"It was the saddest moment of our lives as Americans, but yet it filled our hearts with hope, pride, and determination to cherish our freedoms in this great country and to not let the murder of our fellow Americans be in vain. Regardless of where you were from - whether it be an affluent community or a poor community, whether you were born in this country or you immigrated here, like almost all of our families in this country, whether you personally knew someone in those towers, at the Pentagon, or on those planes or not, it became very clear that we were all effected. It became distinctly clear to everyone in this country that we were all Americans. We were all brothers and sisters in this American family and we were going to support each other, lift each other up, and triumph over the greatest act of evil we have ever seen in this country.

"So where are we as a nation three years removed from that day? Fortunately, no major act of terror resulting in mass casualties has befallen our nation, but we know full well not to take that for granted. We know that there are still thousands upon thousands of men and women around the world who are plotting and planning at this very moment to kill as many as Americans as possible, terrify us, and destroy the principles upon which America was founded. September 11th made it very clear to all of us that America can never afford to take the first punch again. We must seek out those who wish to kill us and kill or capture them before they can act. This global war on terror was not a war of our choosing, but is a war in which we are fully engaged at home and abroad and one that we must and will win.

"As occurs in households throughout America, when one family member is in need, the rest of that family comes to that person's side to help in whatever way is required. Being part of a family means that you will always have someone to count on when you need someone the most. In that same regard, our American family must help those most in need. That means that the parts of this country most at risk for future acts of terror must receive the greatest amount of help to make them safe. Clearly, New Jersey must be near the very top of the list of states that should get valuable federal dollars for First Responders, communications equipment, hazardous materials equipment, and other tools that will allow us to successfully keep the people safe. With the largest seaport on the East Coast, the third busiest airport in the nation, four nuclear power plants, six tunnels and bridges that connect New Jersey to New York City, and many other high level

targets such as the Prudential building in Newark and Giants Stadium, New Jersey needs homeland security resources far more than the vast majority of this country. Our American family must recognize that sending federal dollars to protect our critical facilities here in New Jersey is of much greater importance than sending those same federal dollars to safeguard the cornfields in Iowa. Ensuring that New Jersey gets its fair share of federal homeland security dollars is a cause that I believe is right and is just and I will continue to fight to make sure it happens.

"And we also have the good work of the 9/11 Commission. The report calls for the implementation of a wide array of measures that will make this country safer in the face of global terrorism. From the establishment of a National Intelligence Director to working towards democratic and economic reforms in countries that have been breeding grounds for the majority of terrorists, the recommendations set forth in the 9/11 Commission report are powerful and necessary. While the Commission's recommendations must be further examined by Congress' committees of jurisdiction, we must act swiftly and use the report as the foundation for improvement. It is imperative that we use the lessons learned from that tragic day to transform our intelligence structure so that it can help us uncover and thwart any and all future attacks.

"My friends, three years after the September 11th terrorist attacks, we still remember that day as if it were yesterday. The shock and sorrow we felt are still as deep and profound today. But the love we have our country and all that she stands for is still just as strong, if not stronger than ever. We are proud of our country, but we are keenly aware that we are now a nation at war - a war of self-defense against fundamentalist Islamic terrorists who would sooner kill themselves and others than have the men and women of the world live with freedom and tolerance. As we continue to remember the losses of September 11, let us remain strong, focused, and determined to preserve this magnificent experiment in democracy - the United States of America.

"May God bless the memories of our nearly 3,000 fallen brothers and sisters, and may God continue to bless the United States of America."

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