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September 11, 2003

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Hackensack, NJ – Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) today released the following remarks commemorating the second anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks.

– It is hard to believe that two years have passed since 3,000 of our fellow Americans were killed in the most horrific act of terror ever committed against our citizens, upon American soil. The loss was great. The pain was deep. And all of us will carry this sorrow with us for the rest of our lives as we continue to remember. In the Ninth Congressional District of New Jersey, we lost 55 of our friends and neighbors. It still pains me deeply as I reflect on how the families – the husbands, wives, children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, and nephews – have to continue on in life without their loved ones who were stolen from them.

– While we remember and honor the dead every day, including the hundreds of first responders who rushed into those burning buildings as everyone else was running out, today is a day for every American and every freedom-loving, peaceful human being across the world to reflect on the lives of those lost and to carry their memory forward.

– It has been two years since the September 11th attacks, and we have a responsibility as a nation not to forget the murders of our 3,000 fellow Americans or to let their deaths be in vain. We must do all in our power to prevent such a tragedy from happening again. We know that literally thousands of similarly hate-filled madmen conspire at this very moment to commit even more killings of Americans here at home and abroad. We are dealing with enemies who hate us more than they love life. They are willing to die in order to kill us. They seek no treasure -- no property -- no territorial concession. They simply want to destroy the world's greatest democracy – a nation committed to the equal rights of each individual, including the religious freedom for each of its people.

– The only thing stopping these people from succeeding is the bravery of our young men and women in our military and in our law enforcement, and the unity and determination of the American people. In the aftermath of September 11th, homeland security must be our number one priority. Government's first priority has always been the protection of its people. But that means more than just establishing a Department of Homeland Security. We must make sure that our ports and borders, which are still highly vulnerable to terror attacks, are adequately protected, and we must work to improve coordination among our intelligence services – on the federal, state, and local level.

â€ö We cannot let the fact that there has not been another terrorist attack within the United States since September 11th allow us to be complacent. The threat to our security is real and we must do and spend whatever it takes to ensure that every cargo container is checked at our ports, that every bag and passenger is thoroughly screened at our airports, that every border entrance to our country is properly protected, that every chemical, biological, and nuclear plant and facility is more than adequately guarded, that every person receiving a visa is thoroughly checked out before being allowed to enter our great land, and the list goes on and on.

â€ö While the federal government has made progress toward achieving a number of these goals, there is still a long way to go. For New Jersey, we have already brought home millions for communications equipment, emergency gear, and other first response needs. But New Jersey needs even more help from the federal government to properly address New Jerseyâ€™s homeland security needs, including immediate and additional assistance to our first responders. This will not only make New Jerseyans safer, but it will also relieve local New Jersey taxpayers from bearing the majority of the cost of these security upgrade necessities.

â€ö My friends, America is living through a dangerous time. But, in our 227 year history, each generation has been dearly tested before. In each case, America has prevailed â€“ and we will do so again. Of this, I have no doubt. However, while we cannot and shall not allow these grave threats to compromise our basic American values, or dampen our gratitude for all the blessings we continue to enjoy as citizens of this great country, we must, nonetheless, remain strong, united, determined, and vigilant against those who would do us harm.

â€ö May God bless the memories of our 3,000 fallen, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.â€&A•

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