



Statement of Families of September 11

To be submitted for the record for the
November 13, 2007 public hearing of the
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

More than six years after 9/11, the United States Congress can be applauded for the many changes it has enacted to ensure terrorists cannot attack our homeland again. Congress passed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, reforming the intelligence community and creating the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, while implementing dozens of other 9/11 Commission recommendations. This past summer, Congress passed the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, providing for improved aviation security, creating a commission to study the prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction terrorism and increasing information sharing among federal, state and local law enforcement. These were much needed measures that are making an impact in the prevention of future attacks.

Families of September 11, an organization of more than 2,500 victims' family members, survivors and concern citizens, dedicated to making sure what happened on 9/11 never happens again, is proud to have worked with Congress over the past six years to lend our support to their efforts. However, as big an impact as Congress' work has had, more needs to be done, and done now.

The 9/11 Commission Report states "[o]f all our recommendations, strengthening congressional oversight may be among the most difficult and important." The report outlines the pressing need for the overhaul of the current congressional intelligence oversight structure. "Under the terms of existing rules and resolutions, the House and Senate intelligence committees lack the power, influence, and sustained capability" to adequately oversee our nation's intelligence community.

Families of September 11 understands what is at stake, and fully supports the 9/11 Commission's call for either a "joint committee for intelligence" or the creation of "House and Senate committees with combined authorizing and appropriations powers".

This type of congressional overhaul is not easy. Some members stand to lose power. Change is uncomfortable, inertia takes over.



But the consequences are too important to allow inertia to stave off needed structural reforms in Congress. Since 9/11, the intelligence community has been restructured to meet the new threat, but Congress has not.

Now is the time for Congress to heed to the warnings and advice of the 9/11 Commission, to shine a spotlight on its own structure and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses in its ability to oversee our intelligence community.

Families of September 11 is glad the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is holding today's hearing, and welcomes an opportunity to share our unique perspective on the importance of reforming congressional oversight. Unfortunately, our membership knows all too well the possible consequences of inaction—in human terms—when bureaucratic self interest stymies oversight of the essential government function of intelligence collection and analysis. Due to the secretive nature of intelligence, American citizens can do little more than trust that our government is doing its job in both the executive and legislative branches. To do its job, properly and effectively, Congress must have all the tools necessary to do its job. The 9/11 Commission made clear that was—and is not now—the case.

This year, Congress passed legislation that enacted virtually all of what were the report's as yet unimplemented recommendations. Is it really possible that the 9/11 Commission was right on everything except the changes needed within Congress itself? Please take the difficult step of re-organizing to meet the current threat, so that Americans can begin to trust Congress again.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

Signed,

Board members and founders of Families of September 11

Donald Goodrich, Chairman of the Board
Nancy Aronson, Treasurer
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