

**Floor Statement of Chairman Henry J. Hyde
Resolution Commemorating the Victims of September 11, 2001**

It has been five years since the world watched the impossible happen, and yet it is difficult to believe that the days and months have passed so quickly. The calendar's relentless progress gradually consigns all mortal events to the past, be they tragedies or triumphs. But we would deceive ourselves were we to believe that the consequences of those events will fade as well. For we will continue to live with them all of our lives.

Modern communications have brought us many new and wonderful things, but they have also made possible the communal experience of tragedy. In this new age, distance will no longer spare us, nor can an absence of personal ties insulate us from sorrow.

All who witnessed the events of September 11th still bear the scars of seeing inconceivable images and impossible events unfold in real time. But our own experiences, however painful, cannot compare with those of the innocents who bore the horror directly nor with those of their families and friends who were suddenly and violently severed from their former lives and from the touch of those deeply loved.

We Americans are a practical people. Instead of resigning ourselves to the difficulties of life, we instinctively seek to identify problems in order to focus our efforts and move toward solutions. And, over the past five years, we have done so. We have come to know our enemies and direct our determination and resources to uncovering their hiding places and plans. We are deeply engaged in designing and implementing measures to destroy their ability to harm us. The challenge is an entirely new one for us, but one which gains in clarity with each day. I hope all of us are now aware that, in addition to our successes, we must prepare ourselves for the likelihood of failures in a struggle that may have no end.

By infusing purpose, action can thus fill many voids. But the need remains to understand what happened and to comprehend the meaning of the events of that day. Here, words give way to silence, for deep reflection is the predicate to understanding.

Our modern, rational world once promised, in time, to reveal all secrets to us. But can we still cling to that belief, now that we have been confronted with things we thought long past, vanquished and erased from the world by reason and light?

The modern world has seen many efforts to eliminate God from our lives. But we have not been able to eliminate evil. The last century was unparalleled in human history in its celebration of the

savagery that human beings can wreak upon one another. We had hoped that we might escape that fate in this century, but now we know that we will not.

We have been forcibly awakened from our dreams of an earthly heaven by the bitter knowledge that evil still roams freely in our world.

We cannot allow ourselves to be paralyzed with despair or fear, but neither can we permit our natural optimism to shield us from the realities of the world. If there is any useful thing to be drawn from this terrible experience, it is that we have been given an unmistakable warning that in this new century, unknown and fearsome challenges await us, challenges that will impose the severest tests on our national character.

Knowing this, we have a duty to prepare ourselves to defend not only our lives and those of our children, not only our beloved country, not even our freedoms, but civilization itself. We are Rome, beset by new barbarians who are driven and sustained by their savage hatred of us, of our happiness and our success, of the promise America represents for the world. For our enemies have no aim but destruction, nothing to offer but a forced march back to a bleak and dismal past. Theirs is a world without light, their all-encompassing hatred a repudiation of any saving grace. Their victory would impose a new Dark Age, but, this time, perhaps an endless one. They are enemies of the future itself.

As we resolve ourselves to our task, as we grieve for all those linked to us by tragedy, we may also see ourselves more truly and thereby understand that our great strengths are interwoven with many fragile things. The threats we face have given us a greater sense of how rare and wonderful is the world we have made, and of our responsibility to protect it from the storms outside. For we need but shield our eyes, lay down our burden, and it will vanish into air, a world in which those we remember today were once allowed to be innocents.

It is for these reasons that we remember our 3000 fellow citizens who, asking nothing other than to live their lives in peace, were brutally murdered by men without conscience or mercy. We remember because, in Lincoln's phrase, "the mystic chords of memory" forever bind us to the victims and the heroes of September 11th and to all Americans, from the honored past to the living present. We remember because to forget them would be to betray our own selves and our duty to the generations to come.

May those who died in the attacks of September 11, 2001 rest in the mercy of God. May those of us who remain be steadfast, courageous, and live lives worthy of their great sacrifice.