



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

CHAIRMAN THOMPSON FLOOR STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF:
H.R. 3233, THE “NATIONAL COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE JANUARY 6 ATTACK ON THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL COMPLEX ACT”

SPONSORED BY REPS. THOMPSON AND KATKO

MAY 19, 2021

OPENING

I rise in support of H.R. 3233, the “National Commission to Investigate the January 6 Attack on the United States Capitol Complex Act.”

On January 6th, the world watched Americans storm the Capitol and engage in violence to try to intimidate and prevent Congress from carrying out its constitutional duty to certify a presidential election—a solemn process central to the peaceful transfer of power in our democracy.

Many of us sitting here today were rushed out of this very chamber by Capitol Police to safety as violent attackers roamed the halls-- hunting for our colleagues and the Vice President.

I was in the gallery that day, watching the debate, when this temple of our democracy was desecrated and debased.

At least one Capitol Police officer died because of the violence that day. Others died too.

And there were extensive injuries associated with the attack, not the least of which was the body blow to Americans’ confidence that the reforms undertaken after the 9/11 terrorist attacks would make us more secure.

Like the 9/11 attacks, the events of January 6th have cast a long shadow on our country.

And like the 9/11 attacks, the January 6 attack raises fundamental questions about information sharing, coordination, preparedness, and response at all levels of government.

We need a bipartisan commission made up of experts to come together to give us an unvarnished view of what happened that day, examine why our systems failed, and develop bipartisan recommendations for reforms to address any identified gaps.

I am proud to be here with my partner on the Homeland Security Committee, the gentleman from New York, John Katko, to debate a bill that establishes a 10-member commission that mirrors the 9/11 Commission-- the “gold standard” for bipartisan commissions.

The January 6th Commission would be required to investigate and report on the facts and causes of the attack including relevant contributing factors.

A Commission of this nature, in some form, has been talked about by members of Congress, national security experts, and others for some time now.

Over the past four months, discussion drafts have been circulated, pros and cons have been weighed and obstacles have been overcome to get us to this day.

Given how politically charged the events of January 6th have become, we need to come together in a patriotic, bipartisan way and approve this independent body, just as we created with the 9/11 Commission.

The 9/11 Commission acted not out of partisanship but out of patriotism.

We need that same sense of duty today.

CLOSING

We are here today at a unique moment in American history.

Trust in our government's ability to share information and coordinate at all levels to keep our democracy secure was severely shaken by the January 6th attack.

By passing H.R. 3233 today, we can begin to start to heal the wound that the January 6th attack inflicted on our nation.

In the words of Justice Brandeis, "sunlight is the best disinfectant."

We need an official accounting of the facts and circumstances that contributed to the profound security failures that day.

America is a deeply divided country today.

We need a bipartisan commission with experts who put country ahead of party to come together just as the 9/11 Commission did to lay out the facts and propose solutions to make us more secure.

When the chairmen of the 9/11 Commission issued their final report, they included a message to the public.

It asked that each of us remember how we felt on the day of the attack.

It asked that we recall the grief and sorrow.

It also implored us to remember how the attack spurred us to come together as a nation and act with purpose.

This moment is no less historic, no less important, no less momentous.

And it requires the same common action, both as a Congress and as a country.

Our success as a nation is not guaranteed or pre-ordained, so we are obligated to join together for the sake of our fellow citizens to pursue the truth together.