



We Must Not Forget the Lessons of 9/11

JEFFERSON CITY — The attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, will be forever remembered by all Americans. That day marked the first assault on American territory since the bombing of Pearl Harbor. However, the United States declared war on Japan after the 1941 attack; 9/11 made it clear to all Americans that we were already at war. Although 9/11 was tragic for all Americans, and the sacrifices we have made to improve our security have at times been difficult, we must not forget that day's greatest lesson — that Americans must set aside our differences and stand together if we are to meet the challenges we now face.

September 11 altered the course of American history more profoundly than any event since World War II. Never before have our borders been under such an intense threat from evil infiltrators. During the World Wars, and even in the Cold War, we had the advantage of knowing our enemy. We could point them out on a map. But we are no longer in the midst of a conventional war. Today our enemies work together thousands of miles away from each other. There is no centralized political structure dictating their movements. They are positioned in all corners of the globe, working under the radar, and that is why our security forces must remain vigilant and active.

Americans have shown grit and courage in the sacrifices we have made in the name of national security. Whether through the patriotism of our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, the determination of domestic security personnel and first-responders, or the diligence of ordinary citizens, we know that it is now harder for terrorists to operate in the United States.

These collective efforts show that Americans understand what the attacks of 9/11 have meant in terms of our national security. However, in spite of these efforts, we must not forget what the attacks have taught us about our national identity. Following that fateful day, Americans broke down our old divisions. We were able to get past our differences and take comfort in one another's presence. We were all Americans.

Now, five years later, as the divisions and prejudices of race, class and religion threaten to creep back into place, we must not allow the lessons of that tragic day to go to waste. As we solemnly remember that tragic Tuesday morning, we must remain unified as one America. For if we do not, we will have truly lost.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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