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## **Lest We Forget**

JEFFERSON CITY — Today marks the sixth anniversary of the stunning terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., as well as the anniversary of the first time Americans fought back in the war on terror — in the skies over Pennsylvania. It is a day filled with sorrow, but at the same time, patriotism. It is a time to look back... and a time to look forward. It is part of our past, and it is shaping our future.

On a Tuesday morning in early September, 2001, many of us were readying ourselves for the day that layed ahead. Getting the kids off to the school bus, shaving the overnight stubble that speckled our faces, packing our lunches... all unaware of the dastardly deed that would soon be carried out. I will always remember the images that played out before my eyes on what had been a perfect September day... the burning of one of the World Trade Center Towers. It seemed like some kind of tragic accident. A jumbo jetliner filled with people crashing into the largest and most populated building, in New York City. And then the second plane hit, and we knew that this was no accident. We knew someone had struck at us. Some even knew that this was the start of a war.

As the moments went by, images of people throwing themselves from the towers to escape the all-encompassing flames were soon joined by news that another plane had slammed into the Pentagon. A few minutes later, there was news that yet another airliner was headed for the U.S. Capitol Building. It seemed that we were under attack from every corner. In many ways, we were. I will never forget the image of the World Trade Center towers collapsing... first one, then the other... and thinking, "Oh my God, what about the people inside?" In the days and weeks that followed, we would receive news of heroism that saved as many people as possible. Those heroic actions were paid in the price of more than 3,000 people dying that day, including the 343 New York City firefighters and 23 policemen who fought every instinct and ran toward the smoke and inferno that would become their last call to duty. We also received news of Americans who fought back on that fateful September day, fighting the hijackers in the skies of Pennsylvania, possibly sacrificing themselves and crashing the plane into the ground outside of Shanksville, PA. These heroes gave us hope that we could fight back... and we could win against this terrible evil.

In the months that followed, our military struck back hard at the planners of the attack. Today, our troops continue the fight against terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq. There are many victories... many more than what you'll ever see in the news... but we also know there are setbacks along the way. While too many of our nation's finest young men and women have died in the fighting, we know that what they fight for will be our freedom of tomorrow.

So on this sixth anniversary of the terrorist attacks on New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, stay vigilant in the belief that our freedom is worth fighting for.

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.