

September 11, 2002

On the morning of September 11, 2001, the New York World Trade Center buildings were attacked and destroyed by foreign terrorists. They believed this act would demoralize our country and our democratic way of life. In fact what they accomplished by this horrific act was to unite the American people, and commit us as a nation to route out and eliminate terrorism wherever it is found.

Many of us dads and moms have lived through wars in Vietnam and the Middle East. For you girls and boys, the tragedy of 911 in New York City and Washington D.C. is probably the most historic event you have experienced. This date will surely continue to be observed in future years. The cost of the democracy and freedom we enjoy so readily in America has many times come at very high price. These virtues must be protected and never be taken for granted. And so we remember 911 and the victims of that day, and we take strength from their senseless sacrifice to hatred.

Shortly after 911, I requested and received from ground zero pieces of the destroyed World Trade Center. These pieces appear before you. It was my thought that such pieces would be included in the construction of new city and religious buildings in Parkland. Then as the walls of those new building began to rise, so the World Trade Center would symbolically begin to rise again. I hoped other cities would incorporate pieces in their new buildings in a show of national unity, and send a message to the world that our nation's spirit can never be defeated. Unfortunately, Parkland was one of only a few cities that were able to receive pieces.

So we are here today to commemorate 911 and honor those victims of terrorism and those heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice that day. Please join me in lighting a candle in their memory. We will not forget them. Thank you for being here in unity and sharing in this special time of reflection.