

HEARING ON THE 9/11 COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS: SUFFICIENCY  
OF TIME, ATTENTION, AND LEGAL AUTHORITY--Wednesday, August 11, 2004  
House of Representatives, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence  
Washington, D.C.

OPENING STATEMENT of the Honorable Sherwood Boehlert, Acting Chairman:

The committee will come to order. Welcome to the Science Committee [editorial note: the hearing was held in a room assigned to the Science Committee more suitable to an open hearing than the Intelligence Committee hearing room] , which I am privileged to chair, chair and share with the Intelligence Committee today. There are going to be somewhat unusual proceedings today.

First, I will yield to the chairman of the Intelligence Committee, Mr. Goss, the gentleman from Florida.

*[Remarks by the Honorable Porter Goss: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to take this opportunity to read for the benefit of our members the letter I sent yesterday to Speaker Hastert offering to relinquish my position as chairman of this committee temporarily during the pendency of a confirmation process that I think most of you have read about. The text of the letter that I sent to Mr. Hastert is as follows:*

*"Dear Mr. Speaker: As a result of the honor bestowed upon me by the President today nominating me for the position of Director of Central Intelligence, I believe it is appropriate to relinquish my position as Chairman of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence during the pendency of the confirmation process of that nomination,*

*effective immediately. Therefore, I would ask that you appoint a member to take the chairmanship of the committee on a temporary basis, effective immediately, until the Senate makes a final determination on the President's nomination. I believe it continues to be appropriate for me to remain a member of the committee, however. Thank you for your consideration of this request. Very truly yours, Porter Goss."*

*A copy to Ms. Harman, and that letter has been sent to the Speaker.*

*With that, I come here today with an open mind to listen attentively, to learn from the knowledgeable and distinguished witnesses we have before us today, and we indeed do, and we are grateful for their presence. There is no issue more critical to the safety of the Nation than ensuring that we conduct intelligence operations in the most effective manner possible, and I remain very grateful to Commissioners Kean and Hamilton and the rest of the 9/11 Commission and their staff for thoughtful and dedicated service.*

*As you know, I made very glowing, laudatory remarks about the report. I have actually read it twice now, even most of the fine print, which is hard for old eyes. I think it is a wonderful exposition that every American should read about the danger that confronts us and the way we organize our capabilities to deal with those dangers and what steps are necessary to go forward. I think it is an excellent presentation, worth everybody's time, and I am very proud that this committee was the paternal and maternal committee of setting up the Commission to do their work. I think that the outcome shows that we were justified in the way we handled our business, and I thank you.*

*I yield back to you, Mr. Chairman.]*

Thank you very much, Chairman Goss.

I want to welcome all of you back to Washington for the second in a series of critical hearings to examine the Nation's intelligence community in response to the September 11th terrorist attacks. First things first.

As we all now know, President Bush has nominated Committee Chairman Porter Goss to lead the Central Intelligence Agency during this time of necessary change. I applaud the President's choice, and I applaud the President's timing. And I hope for swift confirmation.

In the eyes of many, this is the silly season in our arena. Let us hope that partisanship won't rear its ugly head during the Senate proceedings. The business we are about is too important for a Republican/Democrat divide.

Mr. Chairman, we wish you well.

Also, we welcome the newest member of the committee, Congresswoman Jo Ann Davis of the Commonwealth of Virginia. We look forward to your valuable additions to this committee.

Before us today are dedicated, learned, and committed leaders of the 9/11 Commission: Chairman Tom Kean and Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton. They have worked diligently and cooperatively to produce very substantive and important recommendations. Those recommendations are welcomed for those of us who have policymaking responsibility.

These hearings are critical to the future and security of our Nation. Now it is up to us to do our job, working in tandem to improve the Nation's intelligence infrastructure.

Some people want to rush to judgment, calling for wholesale restructuring of the intelligence community. Others are resisting change, preferring the status quo as turf protection is emphasized. Neither, it seems to me, is the wisest choice. Change is

inevitable because it is necessary, but we cannot wave a magic wand and wish it to be better. We have to work to achieve improvement.

The Commission's recommendations and bringing the most qualified experts before Congress to testify and share their counsel with us is part of the engagement process that is so essential. The Commission has done excellent work. In so many respects, the Commission's recommendations mirror those of the joint bipartisan, bicameral Intelligence Committees' report, after more than a year of intense deliberation, issued early last year. But we recognized then that the Commission work was underway, so there was an understandable waiting for the recommendations. Now we have those recommendations, and we find in so many areas we are on the same wavelength.

We know the questions. Now our search is for the best possible answers. The American people expect and deserve no less [End of Opening Statement].