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TEN YEARS LATER: REFLECTING ON 9/11

By State Senator Tim Schaffer

COLUMBUS – The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon claimed nearly 3,000 innocent victims and forever changed the lives of the friends and loved ones that were left behind.

Images of that morning’s devastation have permanently stamped our collective consciousness and, in many ways, defined an entire decade.

It’s hard to comprehend that we are now ten years removed from a day in which four commercial flights were simultaneously hijacked in the sky above us. Like many of you, I still vividly remember what I was doing when I first heard what was unfolding.

At that time, I was serving in the Ohio House of Representatives and I was on my way to Columbus for committee hearings and session. I was making my way through Lancaster when the news began filtering through the car radio. I made a quick detour to a friend’s home so I could get to a television and see for myself what was really happening. For the next half hour, we stood before the television like millions of our fellow Americans, trying to fathom the scope of horror and despair being displayed on the screen. By the time I made it to the Statehouse, the second tower had fallen and the Speaker evacuated the House of Representatives in case additional attacks were coordinated in the states’ capitals.

In the days that immediately followed, we heard the tales of emergency workers and good Samaritans who walked through the fire and into the crumbling towers to tend to strangers. For months, the nightly news introduced us to hundreds of families who mourned the loss of a parent, child, sibling, or spouse. And since 9/11, we have watched as our bravest men and women – our heroes keeping us safe here at home -- have been sent off to places with names like Kabul, Fallujah, and Kandahar to defend our nation against future attacks.

The following session, I was asked by the Speaker of the House to chair Ohio’s first homeland security committee—the House Committee on Engineering, Architectural Design and Homeland Security. We evaluated Ohio’s building codes, emergency preparedness plans and other factors that give Ohioans protection from possible future attacks -- protection that we discovered is second to none in the country.

The unsettling reality of September 11, 2001 was unlike anything we had ever seen and something we wish never to experience again. However, we will always remember the selfless acts and courage that shined through in our darkest hour and must never forget those who were lost. As we approach the 10th Anniversary of 9/11, I encourage everyone to take a few moments out of their weekend to reflect on that day and pray for those families and individuals who were directly affected by it.