

**Testimony of Robin K. Wiener
Before the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform**

**Hearings to Review 9/11 Commission Recommendations
Tuesday, August 3, 2004**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for inviting us to testify today, and thank you for holding these hearings. I am honored to be here. My name is Robin Wiener and I appear here before you as a member of the Family Steering Committee, a board member of Families of September 11, and most importantly as the sister of Jeffrey Wiener, who was killed that morning while working at his desk on the 96th floor of Tower One of the World Trade Center.

As tragic as that day was for the victims, their families, and all of our country, America was united – strongly united – for months after the attacks. Sadly, that unity eroded quickly as response to the tragedy became political. Even the families were, at times, drawn into debates that had more to do with politics than finding real solutions to what was, is, and could still be a crisis in our nation.

In the months following September 11, 2001, the families began to advocate for the creation of a commission to investigate the terrorist attacks with the goal of making whatever changes would be necessary to prevent another such attack. The American spirit that drives us to seek the truth has shown itself in the sales of the report – a bestseller by anyone’s calculation.

Unity and truth are vitally important, Mr. Chairman. They are very powerful forces and they are what make this country strong. As Beverly made clear, the American people are reading this report closely. They are absorbing the recommendations. They are watching what you do here today . . . and what you will do in the weeks and months ahead. And they – along with the families – will not be pleased if they see the commission’s recommendations falling by the wayside.

Certainly these hearings are a wonderful start, and I appreciate that the members of this committee have interrupted their recesses to address the most serious issue facing all Americans. This type of response gives me hope that we are going to get things right for the safety and security of all of our citizens.

However, Mr. Chairman, the encouragement that the families and our country receive from the timeliness of these hearings is tempered by a very real fear. The families and the American people are expecting Congress and the Administration to act expediently, but without political expediency. It is important that the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations occur on a timeline that is drawn to protect America, not to protect incumbents of any party. It is vital for our nation that we avoid quick fixes that are inadequate or incomplete.

We recognize that this puts you, your colleagues, and the Administration in a difficult position. How can you act quickly to implement the Commission's recommendations without seeming to make political hay in the process?

The solution, in my opinion, lies in the future of the 9/11 Commission itself.

The families of victims have asked that the Commission be kept alive to oversee the implementation of its recommendations. This bipartisan body is uniquely qualified to monitor implementation and to reassure the American people that the process is working – that the progress being made by our elected leaders is furthering our security, and that all of the recommendations are properly implemented.

On behalf of all families who lost loved ones on 9/11, I want to stress that last point. The 9/11 families have endorsed the Commission's recommendations as a whole. We hope that you recognize that they are all important and are all part of a comprehensive package designed to work in concert to significantly diminish the terrorist threat facing our country.

The Commission report deals with issues that go beyond intelligence czars and counter terrorism centers – issues that have led the news in recent days. The Commission has made important recommendations that deal with issues of foreign policy, border security, terrorist financing, economic policy and the like. I implore you to prioritize, to enact that which can be carried out immediately, while also moving forward on recommendations requiring longer-term discussion.

We, the families, challenge the members of this committee and all members of Congress –

1. *To recognize* that the unprecedented terrorist attacks of September 11 demand an unprecedented effort on the part of Congress that will require streamlining the committee process and exceptional coordination between House and Senate as well as coordination and communication with the Administration.
2. *To provide* the American people with a timetable that Congress is prepared to follow to implement this report. We recognize and we hope that you recognize that your responsibility reaches beyond simply passing legislation. It also includes overseeing its implementation. Legislation that is enacted in response to these recommendations must not be allowed to gather dust until another tragedy happens and another Congress is faced with remedial legislation.
3. *To put aside* turf battles and partisan rivalries and act quickly to do everything that must be done to reduce our vulnerability to another terrorist attack.

In short, Mr. Chairman, the families and the entire country are looking to you and your colleagues to do your work quickly and to do it right... an awesome responsibility. You have a wonderful opportunity before you to take a leadership role. We commend you for calling this hearing today. We commend Mr. Shays and Ms. Maloney for forming a caucus for members committed to enacting all of the commission's recommendations. Hearings like this can be important. Please demonstrate to the American public that you are serious in your efforts.

If I could take a personal moment Mr. Chairman, I was blessed on November 23rd of last year to become the mother of a beautiful little girl named Jennifer, named after the Uncle she will never have the good fortune to know. The seriousness by which you take the job given to you by the

9/11 Commission will not only honor and create a positive legacy to those 3,063 souls who so tragically lost their lives on 9/11, but will determine whether Jennifer and millions of other children like her will grow up in a safe, secure and strong America.

Mr. Chairman, please do what is required. Act smartly and quickly. The families look forward to working closely with you and the rest of the committee to do what is necessary to implement the recommendations.