

Testimony  
of  
Frank J. Fetchet  
Before the  
United States House of Representatives Subcommittee  
on National Security Emerging Threats and International Relations  
Hearing on 9/11 Commission Recommendations:  
Balancing Civil Liberties and Security  
Washington DC  
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Good afternoon, my name is Frank Fetchet and I am pleased to be here today with my better half – my wife Mary. I am a husband, father of 3 sons, and a proud American who also happens to be a 9/11 family member. I continue to live with a heart that is broken, caused by the attacks of 9/11 and the loss of our son Brad. I am also learning to move forward. I am retired after nearly 33 years with a IBM and am a volunteer at a non-profit my wife established called Voices of September 11<sup>th</sup>. My wife Mary and I - and the Voices' team - are committed to helping those impacted by 9/11, advocating for the changes needed to make us safer and reaching out to other cultures and religions to build awareness, tolerance and acceptance. We are committed to making a difference, post 9/11....and it is not a stretch to say, we are.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today – a group of respected political leaders whose mission is near and dear to my family and me – that is offering oversight with a keen focus on today's topic - civil liberties. You are helping America become safer while protecting the underpinnings of our wonderful country – our civil liberties.

My goal today is simple – to offer one man's views on where I personally have been since 9/11, where I think we are as a country now and where I sense we are going. Mary's comments are much more civil liberties centric – while mine are broader, yet hit on the points surrounding this topic. My testimony is personal opinion based on the facts and realities of where we stand. I'm not representing 3000 other family members in my statements – in that opinions will vary widely in this large and diverse population. My sense is that my testimony is not too far off of how the great majority of 9/11 family members feel today. If this exercise helps enable a sharper and more passionate focus on the realities of how exposed we are to radicals on our soil and what needs fixed quickly – I will view this exercise a success.

9/11 is the heinous event that taught many lessons to me, to my fellow Americans and to the world...to all of us. For many younger people, this act took away their innocence, not unlike the way President John F Kennedy's assassination took away my generation's innocence. Our children, Wes and Chris, are certainly examples of this. Rather than spend this valuable time reflecting on a point by

point recollection of the past – I’d rather simply state that until you’ve lost a loved one so viciously, so senselessly, so publicly – you probably don’t understand the pain. 9/11 family members can interface with each other with ease and comfort – we all have personally lived the horror. Pieces of our son Brad have been positively identified five times – and today some are buried, some cremated and in our home and some remain at the NY Medical Examiner’s office. How many times does one reopen a grave site? Will advanced DNA testing techniques find other positive samples? 9/11 still hurts and always will.....

From my experience since 9/11 in coming to Washington I am impressed with the quality, dedication and intelligence of those committed to the public sector. I also feel the insulation that comes with being inside the beltway and frequently wonder if these same individuals really understand the full impacts of 9/11. Reading a report is one thing and will leave impressions – but living through the horror of what we and nearly 3,000 others experienced can easily be lost in the day-to-day business of keeping our government running and evolving a fix to a problem. If each political leader went through what I described in the loss of Brad, I wonder how much more attention this subject would be getting today? My bet is that there would continue to be outrage and a passion to fix things NOW....not over 15 years or so.....but NOW. One key reason any government exists is the protection of its people – and on 9/11 our government failed all of us.

That being said, I view the work that Mary and other like-minded family members did following 9/11 as a testament to our democracy. I recall Mary talking with me about her passion to help drive the formation of an independent and bipartisan commission to look into what went wrong and what changes needed made. I said something like “You can’t fight City Hall” and something to the effect of “after our loss the last thing you need is to be let down after pressing for such sizeable change”. Well she taught me a lesson I will live with forever. You can change City Hall and when like-minded Americans align with a passion that makes sense – the sky is the limit. Mary and the others put a face on what occurred on 9/11 – which ties to my prior point on reading about things versus living them. It had to be hard for our government leaders to say no to the formation of this commission with the ongoing small group of mothers, fathers, siblings and relatives working so very hard. They were all “Voices of 9/11”. Well you know the story – and the 9/11 Commission was formed and in my view Lee Hamilton and Gov. Tom Keane set the tone and the entire team worked together seamlessly – not as Democrats or Republicans. My impression of the Commission’s work is very positive when one considers the scope and timeframe to produce the report and recommendations. Sure you can pick at some aspect of the Commission report and I’ve heard the skeptics – and I’m not one of them.

And if having the discussion with Mary before the Commission was formed was not enough – she then mentioned to me that with the right cohesive focus, this same group of family members could help drive the legislation tied to the 9/11 Commission recommendations. I was smart enough not to doubt her the second

time! Sure enough the trips to DC continued and legislation was passed. Again, the democracy our founding fathers designed still works today – and we know it first hand and all of us should be proud. All of America should take note of this fact.....

So I have touched briefly on where we've been – now I would like to speak to my views on where we are today.

I tend to use the 9/11 Commission recommendations as a thoughtful sizing of the changes needed to make us all safer. It is a base case set of what needs done – no item is optional since the framework ties together. Like most Americans, I am unaware of the inner workings of our government. I have gotten very comfortable that the work was very thoughtful, unbiased and lays a roadmap for what changes need made. You will recall that at the conclusion of their in depth work, the Commission released a detailed book followed by a report card. The report card was simple, easy to read and easy to understand.....almost a Consumer Reports summary. Suffice it to say that if one of my boys brought home such a report card, there would be very immediate and noticeable change in our household! After years in business, a report card such as this in corporate America would have resulted in board outrage, executive changes and a reassurance to shareholders and employees that the wheels had not come off the company. Honestly, I have been shocked by the reaction in our government to the number of Ds and Fs.....sure there has been acknowledgement of the grading but where is the outrage in our government? This is not a report card on some obscure topic.....it is on our nation's safety and what needs remedied – after acknowledged failures. This should be a rallying point for all of our government.

The 9/11 Commission legally wound down and yet the Commission members stayed in tact by securing funding and renaming themselves the Public Discourse Project or PDP. I truly admire the fact the Commission members felt such a passion that they agreed to extend their mission through the PDP. Again, the PDP closed last year but before doing so the PDP reissued an updated report card on how our government is doing in making us safer through the recommended changes. This was a year or so after the first report card and - though some progress had been made – it was spotty and continued the prior report card's poor ratings. Again, where is the outrage? A corporate leadership team with such a report card a year after the first poor one would likely be looking for jobs.....

I have been joining Mary on relatively frequent visits to DC to advocate for the 9/11 Commission recommendations. Having been a sales executive for a number of years, I am an optimist at heart – and tend to look at the cup as half full, not half empty. Every time we return home from our trips I am impressed with the high quality personnel in our government touching aspects of the Commission recommendations. I often ask Mary “Did we make a difference?” “How will we know if our time was well spent”? Yet I always wonder, “Where is the sense of

urgency?” It’s like watching a movie in slow motion...Katrina showed us how unprepared we still are.....

Now to where I feel we are headed or need to be headed. I’ve been through the near death experience of one of America’s finest companies – IBM. Lou Gerstner came in from outside IBM, took control, gave clear direction, made tough decisions and implemented the changes needed to win in the marketplace. He took on the task of changing a well entrenched culture – and made believers out of us who stayed on. Those who did not agree, left the company – and it was a good thing for both sides. I find this example as indicative of what the US government must do. We must reinvent our government...not unlike a corporation must reinvest itself as the market changes.

Let’s look at questions that come to mind as a long time sales exec....and I wondered about these following the first 9/11 Commission report card. Is there an overall strategy? Do people clearly understand it and what their role is? Does the strategy include our foreign policy? How about foreign aid? Does it include moving away from the current large and growing oil consumption? Who is in charge and accountable? Do we have a tactical and strategic action plan? Is the management system in place to drive change? How urgent are people to carry their share of the load? Are people being paid more to work in the ‘to be’ model and conversely are those not changing – leaving our government or being paid less? Are people being held accountable up and down the management chain? These are pretty basic questions but after being in and out of Washington numerous times since 9/11 – I sure can’t answer these questions and it would be interesting to get our governmental leadership in a room, how many varying answers there would be.

These are basic principles of driving a turnaround. We would have varying answers to each of these questions. You can “spin” the response to each one. 9/11 happened and the government failed – no debate there. But I am continually amazed at how many people are in charge (or act like they are), how many decisions appear held up due to turf issues or outside influences and, again, how slowly things get done.

I remember President John Kennedy’s goal of landing a man on the moon before the end of the 60’s – what a rallying point for all of America! I see driving our country’s safety as THE paramount issue.....one that our leadership should be driving just like JFK did his goal of a manned moon landing. Americans would rally around such a goal – whether preparedness in our homes, schools or workplace – college students in a “Peace Corp” like commitment to make a difference in a safer world – and each of us asking what we are doing to contribute. We need the passion and drive as a nation.....we need the passion to make this top of mind and give answers to citizens asking, “What can I do?”

Let me close by saying thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am honored. As I said at the beginning, I am a husband, father of 3 sons, 9/11 victim's parent and a proud American who continues to live with a heart broken by the attacks of 9/11. I am healing and continue to reflect - yet am hopeful and optimistic for the future. We are part of the greatest country on earth – and you in your key leadership roles are critical to making us a safer country. We need you to continue to press for the changes we need – as rapidly as possible.

Thank you.....