



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins: Never Forget

JACK M. MARTINS September 6, 2011

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September 11 Ceremonies Around the District

Roslyn - Friday, Sept. 9 at 9 a.m. at the Ellen B. Ward Memorial Clock Tower, Main Street and Old Northern Boulevard.

Floral Park - Sunday, Sept. 11 at 2 p.m. at United Methodist Church, 35 Verbena Avenue, South Floral Park.

Great Neck - Sunday, Sept. 11 at 8 a.m. Dedication of 9/11 Memorial at Vigilant Fire Company, 83 Cutter Mill Road.

Saddle Rock - Sunday, Sept. 11 at 8:45 a.m. at Memorial Bridge, Bayview Avenue north of Gristmill Lane.

Stewart Manor - Sunday, Sept. 11 at 7 p.m. at the Stewart Manor Country Club, 51 Salisbury Avenue.

Williston Park - Sunday, Sept. 11 at 4 p.m. at 9/11 Memorial Garden, Kelleher Field, Syracuse Street and Stratford Avenue.

Thoughts on the Tenth Anniversary

It's difficult to write about the tenth anniversary of 9/11. Representing a district that suffered a tremendous loss of life that day, one that saw so many of our first responders involved in rescue efforts, I thought it best to avoid platitudes that bring very little comfort to those still suffering. Instead I will simply share some observations on where we stand now.

September 11th will go down as one of the defining historical events in our nation's history, much like Pearl Harbor or John F. Kennedy's assassination. These events spur people to action and generally shape policy for years to come. In this case, it sparked an unprecedented war on terrorism, both at home and abroad. It reminded us just how precious life is, it emphasized that which unites us, and it gave us an appropriate appreciation for our service men and women, police officers and firefighters who protect us personally and who protect our way of life.

Yet for better or worse the passing of ten years have passed. Negatively, I've had the staggering experience of speaking to some young people who knew little of the day's actual events. They were of course familiar that "9/11" was a tragedy involving terrorists but

couldn't tell me much more. After Osama Bin Laden's recent death, friends shared that while their children were aware he had been a hunted enemy, they were unsure as to why. Of course, we don't blame the kids at all. Many of these children were toddlers at the time and some had not even been born. I do blame us though. While researching the issue I discovered that 9/11 is not part of any set, core curriculum, not even for high school students. We teach them about genocide, the Holocaust, and rightly so, and the Irish potato famine, but not 9/11. While tens of thousands of service men and women still serve overseas, when we've buried thousands of them and even more have come home injured, we don't bother to teach our children why. I know it's difficult because I've tried to relate details to some students and had the painful realization that I had just overwhelmed them. Yet I can't help but recall the adage that "those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." There are lessons to be learned from September 11th, not only about the damage that hatred can produce but lessons about unity, tolerance, and sacrifice.

Those very sentiments felt so strongly ten years ago seem to be missing in today's headlines. There is immense disagreement on how responsible we as a nation are for the medical benefits of those who served at ground-zero. While the federal government passed the Zadroga Act, it does nothing to address cancer-related illness. Studies indicate increased rates of cancer for those who were exposed to the carcinogens at ground zero and yet the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health says there isn't quite enough evidence. I wonder how much evidence we need. Isn't it enough that we called on them and they answered? This time it's we who must answer the call.

It's been ten long years. Let's not forget what we've learned or how we felt or else all those we loved died in vain. We must memorialize those who died by recalling the spirit, strength and unity we showed as a nation and keeping it alive now and into the future. Never forget.