

This Saturday, the nation will pause to reflect on that tragic morning nine years ago as New York City, Arlington, Virginia, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania suffered the combined loss of thousands of American lives at the hands of Al Qaeda terrorists. The 9/11 anniversary also comes on the heels of the official end of American combat operations in Iraq and a greater focus on the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan, a location which has become increasingly violent for our soldiers.

Our intelligence and law enforcement communities have been working overtime in the years since 2001 to help prevent further terror assaults on our homeland. Many such attempts have been thwarted, including planned attacks on Fort Dix, New Jersey, Los Angeles, and New York's subway system. Unfortunately, we've also witnessed terror-related deaths at Fort Hood, Texas.

History has demonstrated we cannot afford to let down our guard against an enemy that knows no timetable for surrender and has shown great patience as it probes for weakness. This is especially relevant as the Obama administration shifts emphasis from Iraq to Afghanistan.

Last week, President Obama spoke to the nation from the Oval Office announcing the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom and U.S.-led combat operations in that country. There was a strong irony in his declaration of a successful end to combat operations. In 2007, then-Senator Obama went out of his way to oppose the very military strategy that has successfully reduced sectarian violence. To his credit, the president rightly praised our military personnel for this accomplishment and even noted President Bush's commitment to our troops and America's security.

Looking ahead, Mr. Obama renewed attention to the war in Afghanistan through the deployment of more troops to assist General David Petraeus's assault on the resurgent Taliban. While I applaud the president's support of General Petraeus and our military in Afghanistan, I join many others in urging caution and careful planning as we reduce our military role in Iraq. That Middle Eastern nation remains in the crosshairs of terrorist groups and the extremist leadership of neighboring Iran who benefit from a return to chaos in Iraq.

The president wants to shift resources away from Iraq, not only to bolster our military in Afghanistan, but also to help fund his plans for increased domestic spending. America's security must not be short changed. President Obama's decision to shift military efforts away from Iraq no doubt also emboldens our enemies who are eager to take our place there. The president should be equally clear that America remains committed to providing military support as needed while Iraq seeks to become the only Arab democracy in a volatile region.

Reflecting on South Alabama Town Meetings:

Last year, widespread opposition to the president's health care and cap and trade energy plans drove 5,000 people to my congressional town meetings. Two weeks ago, I heard from many of you and your neighbors about the new health care law as well as the federal government's poor handling of the economy. No matter where I was, from Bayou La Batre to Brewton, you made clear that you are not happy with the way the White House and liberal-led Congress have ignored the will of the American people.

More than a few people asked me about efforts to repeal the unpopular health care law. As I told the town meeting audiences, I voted against the administration's health care law and I support its repeal. Unfortunately, the president still commands the power of the veto pen and would very quickly stop any bill Congress might pass to undo his healthcare law. I am committed to working with other conservatives in using Congress's one tool – the ability to withhold funding – to halt the implementation of the costly and burdensome government health care law. Health care needs reform, not radical restructuring that takes away patient choice of health care plans and doctors.

On the economy, I pointed to our nation's unsustainable federal budget deficits and overall debt which have dramatically increased since President Obama took office. I opposed the president's unsuccessful \$787 billion economic stimulus and support keeping the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts to drive economic growth.

Not surprisingly, a number of questions came up about the local economic impact of the Gulf oil spill and ongoing efforts to process claims. I am working with Governor Riley and local leaders to ensure that BP and the federal claims administrator, Ken Feinberg, live up to their commitments to make whole those affected by the spill.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.