

OPENING STATEMENT
CONGRESSMAN PETER T. KING
before the
HOUSE FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MARKUP OF THE TRUE AMERICAN HEROES ACT: H.R. 1057

MARCH 16, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to take just a minute to make a couple of comments about the bill H.R. 1057, and about how it differs from previous versions of the legislation.

As members know, very similar versions of this bill were passed three times by the House, twice by voice vote and once by a 392-2 roll call vote. All of those called for the award of a Congressional gold medal to the next of kin of each First Responder who died serving others during the tragic attacks of September 11, 2001.

However, in view of the very important gold medal reforms authored by Mr. Castle, I and my co-sponsors — the gentle lady from New York, Mrs. Maloney, along with Congressman Engel and Chairman Tom Davis — have rewritten the bill. Now, it awards a single gold medal to the first First Responder killed that day. Of course, we don't know who that is, so the medal would be similar to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier — a tribute to many vested in an unnamed individual. The medal would go on permanent display at the Smithsonian, and silver copies would go to the next of kin of all the First Responders killed that day. The gold medal would be awarded on the fifth anniversary of the attacks, September 11, 2006.

As with the previous versions, commemorative coins would be struck and offered for sale with a surcharge that would pay for the cost of gold medal and the duplicates, as well as specially packaging one of the gold commemorative coins to be given to the next of kin of each person killed in attacks that day — all 2,900 or so. The remaining surcharge money, which might amount to as much as \$5 million, depending on sales, would be divided equally between the three attack sites to help build or maintain memorials there.

This legislation conforms to all rules and laws regarding Congressional medals and commemorative coins, would not cost the taxpayer a cent while allowing individual taxpayers to buy a coin to commemorate those attacks, and would not conflict with any other legislation seeking to establish memorials, or to honor the heroic First Responders who died that day.

Mr. Chairman, we have all seen the pictures and heard the stories of the heroes who rushed into the World Trade Center to do their jobs, knowing it could mean their deaths. I knew many of them, and knew many of their families, as did many Members of this Committee — and here I am thinking in particular of Mr. Crowley, who suffered a personal loss we can all empathize with.

I ask for swift passage of this legislation, hope for equally swift floor action, and hope that the other body will also consider it swiftly so that the United States Mint has adequate time to prepare exceptional medals and coins. With that, I yield back the balance of my time.