

Committee on Financial Services
Hearing
The 9/11 Commission Report: Identifying and Preventing Terrorist Financing
Opening Statement of Shelley Moore Capito
August 23, 2004

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your calling this special session of the Financial Services Committee. Even though Congress is not scheduled to re-convene for another two weeks, having studied the September 11th Commission's report over the last month, I believe that it is vital that we immediately begin the process of examining and deliberating the various recommendations of the panel.

First, let me commend the Commission for the incredible work they have done. All of the emotions I felt on that cool September day came rushing back as I turned the pages of the 9/11 Report. Upon finishing the first chapter, I half expected to look out my window in the Longworth Building and see the smoke from the Pentagon still rising toward the sky. While emotionally charged, I strongly believe that the report is something that every American should read. We must never forget the lengths that those who hate the freedoms we enjoy will go to in order to move their cause forward.

Many of the recommendations in the Report have great merit and I am looking forward to hearing the various proposals discussed today. I am especially interested to learn the panel's views on Title III of the USA Patriot Act, which this committee passed within weeks of the attack.

Under Chairman Oxley's leadership, this committee early on recognized that the ability to track and eventually choke off the flow of money to terrorist organizations would become one of our most effective weapons in the war on terror. Signed into law just six weeks after September 11th, Title III gave our law enforcement agencies the tools they needed to disrupt our enemy's ability to finance their war of destruction and hate. To date, we have successfully frozen almost \$200 million in terror-related assets.

Title III also provided these law enforcement agencies with enhanced authority to share information and better coordinate their investigations with the intelligence community and the nation's financial institutions.

While we have accomplished much, recent revelations of Al Queda's detailed surveillance of U.S. financial institutions indicate that more may need to be done. The dilemma we face however is making sure that we do not tip the scales with respect to balancing our need to disrupt terrorist financing with further restrictions on our personal liberties. A fine line to be sure but an important one.

Again, I want to thank the Commissioners for appearing before us today and am looking forward to their testimony. And I thank the chair.