

September 11, 2011 marks one of the most difficult anniversaries in our national history. Ten years ago, ruthless terrorists hijacked four American jetliners, crashed three of them into buildings, and stole the lives of 2,977 innocent victims.

At the World Trade Center, at the Pentagon, and in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, the men, women and children who lost their lives will be remembered on September 11. At firehouses and police stations across the country, first responders will stop for a moment to remember their fallen comrades. Around dinner tables of the family members who lost their loved ones, tears will be shed and well-worn stories retold.

September 11 remains a solemn occasion for our nation. It is a memorial to the victims of the attacks a decade ago, and the day stands apart as the day the term "heroism" was redefined for our nation.

While thousands ran out of the Twin Towers, hundreds of others ran in. While the injured lay in the rubble of their Pentagon offices, their colleagues in uniform rushed to their sides. And aboard United Flight 93, passengers discovered that their captors were on a suicide mission that would kill them all and perhaps thousands more, and they took decisive action with the words, "Let's roll."

And just as important as remembering the events of September 11 and vowing to never let that happen again, there is also our obligation to remember the days and weeks which followed that horrific day. Those days tell the story of a nation that came together in grief and anger. We became stronger by affirming the importance of our freedom and liberty.

In the aftermath of a national tragedy, our country resolved to remain resolute. Patriotic symbols adorned our homes, our shop windows, and the bumpers of our trucks. Americans united in the face of a tragedy which was plotted to tear us apart.

Ten years after September 11, the challenges facing our great nation are mounting. We have much to do: put our fiscal house in order, revitalize the American economy, overcome bitter political divisions, restore a spirit of innovation, and remind one another of the power and

promise of the American dream. These things are possible only if we remember and recover the spirit of our country ten years ago.

We are all Americans, before we are Democrats or Republicans, black or white, fifth-generation Missourians or first-generation Americans. Our countrymen from all walks of life serve our country. All of us adhere to the same core beliefs, we are all created equal, we are all entitled to basic freedoms guaranteed by our forefathers and passed on from generation to generation, and we are all responsible for the nation's continued greatness.

It took a terrible tragedy to force that realization upon us ten years ago. We should never forget the amazing courage of our country which followed. It is as sacred and as hallowed and as fundamental to our national identity as the memory of the people who perished that fateful day.