

# **TESTIMONY OF JOE QUINN**

**TUESDAY, JULY 9, 2024**

## **HEARING ON THE 9/11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM ACT, H.R. 5401**

### **HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL RESOURCES, SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS and PUBLIC LANDS**

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on HR 5401, the 9/11 Memorial & Museum Act. Thank you to this Committee for your support in the past, and thank you to Representatives D’Esposito and Goldman for your continued support and for providing testimony today.

One-third of the U.S. population was too young to remember or has been born since 9/11/01. That’s 100 million Americans having no lived memory of the worst terrorist attack in history – a day that changed our lives forever.

H.R. 5401, the 9/11 Memorial and Museum Act, sponsored by Representative Anthony D’Esposito, is an important piece of legislation that will ensure the federal government partners with the Memorial & Museum for the ongoing protection, safety, and security of the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, it’s millions of annual visitors, and its staff. The 9/11 Memorial and Museum is considered a high-value target by malicious actors and terrorist groups.

My name is Joe Quinn. I’m a military veteran and member of the 9/11 Memorial community. During my senior year at the United States Military Academy at West Point, 9/11 happened. I remember that day like it was yesterday, with my roommate Joe Peppers calling out to me, saying, “Joe, turn on the TV, the Twin Towers are on fire.” I turned on the television to see the towers burning at the top like smokestacks. Then my phone rang. It was my mother. She said, ‘Are you watching this? We’re at war. You’re at West Point and we’re now at war,’ not even thinking of the safety of my brother Jimmy who worked for Cantor Fitzgerald on the 102nd floor of the North Tower.

My brother Jimmy was everything to me: my best friend on top of being my brother. We were bunkbed mates in our shared room of our home in Brooklyn, New York.

During the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, my brother and I were just teenagers with our entire futures ahead of us. We really didn’t understand why someone would attack the World Trade Center, nonetheless why they would attack it again, providing a false sense of security when my brother would accept his first job out of college with Cantor Fitzgerald at just 23 years-old.

My brother Jimmy would tell people that he worked on “Top of the World,” and that’s how we felt, until it all came crashing down on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

From my television set in my room at West Point, I watched the North Tower collapse with my brother inside of it, and I collapsed to the floor with it. My roommate Joe Peppers picked me up off the floor, and I eventually made my way out of my room and down to Ground Zero the next day.

I made my way as close to Ground Zero as possible before being stopped by a police officer who told me I couldn't go through. I told him my brother was in there. We both stared at the fire, smoke, soot and rubble and knowingly said nothing to each other. We both knew my brother couldn't be 'in there.'

That day I vowed to never let something like this happen again, so after graduating West Point, I was commissioned as an officer in the United States Army – doing two tours in Iraq as soldier and eventually a tour in Afghanistan as a civilian advisor.

After getting out of the Army, I'd study terrorism at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and then became an Instructor at West Point's Combating Terrorism Center, and one of my greatest takeaways from that period of study is the importance of symbolism for targets of terrorism.

While it didn't make sense to me as a teenager, it now made sense to me why terrorists would attack the World Trade Center in 1993 and then again in 2001. It's because the World Trade Center was a symbol of freedom, economic power and the power of our diversity as a nation– with every race, religion and creed being attacked on 9/11 to include citizens from more than 90 countries.

The site of the World Trade Center – the 9/11 Memorial & Museum – will continue to be a target, not only because it represents our strength and diversity, but it now represents our resilience and unity.

23 years later, I still struggle with the loss of my brother, Jimmy. It's not only that he was killed, but it was how he was killed. I picture him being scared. He was asthmatic and scared of heights. As the smoke rose, he had to peer down 102 stories and choose between smoke inhalation or jumping to his death, and I couldn't do anything to protect him.

23 years later, I'm now back living in New York City with my family. I've followed my brother's footsteps working in finance, for the firm, Drexel Hamilton, where we have a mission of hiring veterans, and where I bring veterans to the 9/11 Memorial on a monthly basis.

I'm also lucky enough to be married to a Gold Star family member, where my wife's oldest brother was killed in Iraq. We have three wonderful kids now – 7, 5 and 3 years of age, where one of them is named after his uncles – and who we take to the 9/11 Memorial often to visit their Uncle Jimmy, since his remains were never found.

How much is it worth to protect my children and the thousands of children who visit the 9/11 Memorial every year?

How much is it worth to protect my parents and the 8,000 9/11 family members who gather at the Memorial every year?

How much would we give to protect more than 77 million visitors from every state in the U.S., from all walks of life, from 175 countries that have visited over the last 10 years – including tens of thousands of active, retired and veterans who visit every year?

If you close your eyes, and remember how you felt on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, then the answer is simple.

I'd give anything for my brother to be alive, but I've learned the hard way that there's nothing I can do for him now, after failing to protect him.

But there's something I can do now, there's something we can all do now, to protect our children, to protect our veterans, and to protect our fellow citizens from terrorist's number one target – the 9/11 Memorial & Museum site – where we can protect its legacy as place of healing, resilience and unity.

Thank you for your support for this important piece of legislation and thank you for honoring America's promise to Never Forget.

## **9/11 Memorial & Museum**

The 9/11 Memorial & Museum remembers and honors the 2,983 people killed in the horrific attacks of September 11, 2001 and the February 26, 1993 World Trade Center bombing, as well as those who risked their lives to save others and all who demonstrated extraordinary compassion in the aftermath of the attacks. It fulfills this mission through commemoration, exhibitions, and education. Since its dedication on September 11, 2011, the 9/11 Memorial has welcomed 77 million visitors from all 50 states and 175 countries; and the Museum has welcomed more than 23 million individuals since its dedication on May 15, 2014.

In the middle of the World Trade Center site is the 9/11 Memorial plaza, eight acres dedicated to remembering every individual killed on September 11, 2001, the six individuals killed as a result of the terrorist bombing of the World Trade Center on February 26, 1993, and all who are sick or have died as a result of exposure to toxins at and around the attack sites during the recovery efforts post-9/11, , and those who have become sick or have died due to exposure to toxins during recovery efforts at the three 9/11 attack sites. Anchoring the plaza are two twin reflecting pools with waterfalls, each about an acre in size and set within the footprints of the original Twin Towers. The Memorial is a powerful reminder that visitors are standing on the physical site where the attacks occurred.

Situated 70 feet below the plaza and within the archaeological heart of the World Trade Center site, the 9/11 Memorial Museum is comprised of 110,000 square feet of exhibition and public space. It tells the story of 9/11 and its continuing significance through multimedia displays, archaeological excavations, in situ historical remnants, artifacts, recorded testimonies, and compelling narratives.

The Museum houses two core exhibitions. In the footprint of the North Tower is the historical exhibition, which presents the events of September 11, 2001 as they unfolded that day, the historical antecedents leading up to the attacks, and the recovery efforts and acts of compassion, volunteerism, and public service evidenced in the days, months, and years following the attacks. The Museum's memorial exhibition, In Memoriam, located in the South Tower footprint, tells the personal stories of the nearly 3,000 individuals who were killed in the terrorist attacks of 2001 and 1993. Other galleries are dedicated to changing exhibitions, or special installations related to 9/11 and the World Trade Center site. The Museum also offers a slate of educational and public programming that fulfills the institution's mission. The primary goals of these programs are to accurately convey what happened on 9/11 and in its aftermath, to connect audiences to the human impact of the attacks, and to underscore the ongoing relevance of the attacks today. The Museum is an active collecting institution, caring for more than 75,000 objects.

**Memorial:** We are the proudly designated custodian responsible for monitoring a site with extraordinarily complex infrastructure and mechanical systems that require constant attention: 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The continuous operation and maintenance of the Memorial plaza and Museum is of utmost importance, ensuring through the highest standard of care that it can exist in perpetuity.

The 9/11 Memorial & Museum was consciously designed and constructed to incorporate sustainable practices for a healthy, efficient, carbon- and cost-saving green facility. The 9/11 Memorial was awarded LEED Gold Certification in July 2015 based on sustainable design elements and practices that address the impact of the site's carbon footprint, including optimized energy usage, water conservation and storm water management, as well as a heat island effect with green roof and landscaping. The eight-acre site has ample public green space, including over 400 swamp white oak trees and 45,750 square feet of groundcover. Existing sustainability and green practices include a green roof that sits on layer of structural soil, which allows landscaping, including trees, groundcover, and grass, to grow freely without being confined to planters. Additionally, during non-drought conditions, 100% of the landscape irrigation demand is met by a storm water harvesting system, whereby rain that falls on the plaza flows to four harvest tanks where the water is filtrated for landscaping purposes.

**Security:** In 2024, the 9/11 Memorial remains one of the busiest tourist sites in New York City and, as such, safety for the thousands of daily visitors is of the utmost importance, representing one of the institution's highest annual expenses. Furthermore, with the 9/11 Memorial & Museum situated at a site that was the target of two terrorist attacks, it remains a site of significant risk. The 9/11 Memorial security staff, working in coordination with local, state, and federal law enforcement, is responsible for the safety and security of all who visit the Memorial.

Security personnel are stationed on the plaza to monitor visitors' behavior, including possible damage to Memorial parapets; from walking through protected areas; ensuring animals and pets do not enter the Memorial grounds; and enforcing the site's list of prohibited items and rules regarding unauthorized media and expressive activity on the plaza. Simultaneously, other on-duty security personnel are posted throughout the Museum interior screen visitors entering the Museum to ensure all guests comply with TSA style (e.g., x-ray, magnetometer) screening; safekeep of exhibitions and individual artifacts on display; and monitor the loading dock and employee entrance according to industry standards.

**Education:** 9/11 Memorial & Museum currently offers a diverse slate of programs which aim to accurately convey what happened on 9/11 and in its aftermath, to connect our audience to the human impact of the attacks, and to underscore their ongoing relevance today. Inquiry-based and interdisciplinary, they provide an accurate historical understanding and foster the critical thinking skills and empathy required to tackle this challenging content. Key programs include:

- 9/11 Anniversary Digital Learning Experience (DLE): Offered annually on the Anniversary, this commemorative program (formerly known as Anniversary in the Schools) introduces students and teachers from around the world to 9/11 through first-person accounts of the attacks and their aftermath and a live chat with Museum staff. For many students, this is their first time learning about 9/11. For many educators, the program serves as an introduction to our work and mission. In 2023, 22% of participating students were in elementary school, 41% in middle school, and 37% in high school. To date, the DLE has reached over 3.2 million individuals from all 50 states and 60 countries, with ample room to grow.
- 9/11 Memorial & Museum Field Trips (In-Museum/Virtual): Our inquiry-based field trips introduce 9/11 and its aftermath through guided tours. To convey this history, the programs focus on the stories of those affected and draw from the Museum's permanent collection of more than 21,500 artifacts. An increased investment in education will enable outreach to specific target markets across the country.
- Professional Development for Educators (PD): We offer a diverse slate of programs to help elementary, secondary, and pre-service educators teach 9/11 in their classrooms. Our Educator Conference Series invites educators into the Museum, providing interdisciplinary tools and

strategies for teaching this challenging content. In summer 2023, we launched the Institute for Educators bringing educators from around the country for a more in-depth weeklong experience. Museum staff also regularly delivers professional development sessions to education conferences around the country. Presentations focus on current topics within the social studies, civic education, and 9/11 scholarship. Our research estimates that for every teacher/educator we reach, they in turn teach anywhere from 30-150 students.

- **Digital Education Toolkit:** We currently offer a range of online resources for educators and learners, including interactive lesson plans, the 9/11 primer, digital exhibitions, and interactive timelines. Funding will assist Education staff in expanding these offerings for students and teachers; for example, by creating additional lesson plans geared towards these grades and supporting the filming and archiving of Professional Development workshops on our website.
- **Youth and Family Programs:** We offer a variety of programs for visitors with children. All activities use age-appropriate language to help children learn more about 9/11 and how people responded to the attacks. Current programs include the 9/11 Memorial Art Cart, 45-minute Youth & Family Tours of the Museum, and art-based Activities at Home.

### **9/11 Memorial & Museum's Mission**

*The National September 11 Memorial & Museum at the World Trade Center bears solemn witness to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and February 26, 1993. Respecting this site made sacred through loss, the Memorial & Museum remembers and honors the nearly 3,000 victims of these attacks and all those who risked their lives to save others. It further recognizes the thousands who survived and all who manifested extraordinary compassion and leadership in the wake of the attacks. Demonstrating the consequences of terrorism on individual lives and its impact on communities at the local, national, and international levels, the Memorial & Museum attests to the triumph of human dignity over human depravity and affirms an unwavering commitment to the fundamental value of human life.*

*May the lives remembered, the deeds recognized, and the spirit reawakened be eternal beacons, which reaffirm respect for life, strengthen our resolve to preserve freedom, and inspire an end to hatred, ignorance, and intolerance.*