

(Washington, D.C.) – Following the recent decision by the FBI to close its investigation into the 2001 anthrax letter attacks, Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) called for new Congressional investigations into the government’s handling attacks, The attacks evidently originated from a postal box in Holt’s Central New Jersey congressional district, killing five, and disrupting the lives and livelihoods of many of his constituents. The attacks greatly contributed to the national fear of terrorism and affected the response of our nation to these attacks. Holt has consistently raised questions about the federal investigation into the attacks. Last week, he succeeded in including language in the 2010 Intelligence Authorization Bill that would require the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community to examine the possibility of a foreign connection to the 2001 anthrax attacks.

“The American people need credible answers to all of these and many other questions. Only a comprehensive investigation—either by the Congress, or through the independent commission I’ve proposed in the Anthrax Attacks Investigation Act (H.R. 1248)—can give us those answers,” Holt said in a letter to the Chairmen of the House Committees on Homeland Security, Judiciary, Intelligence, and Oversight and Government Reform.”

A copy of his letter is below:

Dear Chairmen Thompson, Conyers, Reyes, and Towns,

I am writing to ask that your committees, either individually or jointly, conduct a probing investigation of our government’s handling of what has been known as the “Amerithrax” investigation.

As you are aware, last week the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced it was formally closing its investigation into the 2001 anthrax letter attacks, commonly known as the “Amerithrax” investigation. The Bureau has maintained since his suicide in 2008 that the late Dr. Bruce Ivins was their principal suspect in the attacks, a conclusion reaffirmed by the FBI when it closed the case last week—despite the fact that the FBI’s entire case against Ivins is circumstantial, and that the science used in the case is still being independently evaluated.

To date, there has been no comprehensive examination of the FBI’s conduct in this investigation, and a number of important questions remain unanswered. We don’t know why the FBI jumped so quickly to the conclusion that the source of the material used in the attacks could only have come from a domestic lab, in this case, Ft. Dietrick. We don’t know why they

focused for so long, so intently, and so mistakenly on Dr. Hatfill. We don't know whether the FBI's assertions about Dr. Ivins' activities and behavior are accurate. We don't know if the FBI's explanation for the presence of silica in the anthrax spores is truly scientifically valid. We don't know whether scientists at other government and private labs who assisted the FBI in the investigation actually concur with the FBI's investigative findings and conclusions. We don't know whether the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Postal Service have learned the right lessons from these attacks and have implemented measures to prevent or mitigate future such bioterror attacks.

The American people need credible answers to all of these and many other questions. Only a comprehensive investigation—either by the Congress, or through the independent commission I've proposed in the Anthrax Attacks Investigation Act (H.R. 1248)—can give us those answers.

As you may know, my interest in this matter is both professional and personal. The attacks originated from a postal box in my Central New Jersey congressional district and they disrupted the lives and livelihood of my constituents. For months, Central New Jersey residents lived in fear of a future attack and the possibility of receiving cross-contaminated mail. Mail service was delayed and businesses in my district lost millions. Further, my own Congressional office in Washington, D.C. was shut down after it was found to be contaminated with anthrax.

Given its track record in this investigation, I believe it is essential that the Congress not simply accept the FBI's assertions about Dr. Ivins alleged guilt. Accordingly, I ask that your committees investigate our government's handling of the attacks, the subsequent investigation, and any lessons learned and changes in policies and procedures implemented in the wake of the attacks.

Sincerely,

RUSH HOLT  
Member of Congress