

“NAS Report Makes Clear There Are Still Questions to be Answered and Still Lessons to be Learned”

(Washington, D.C.) – Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today is reintroducing the Anthrax Attacks Investigation Act, legislation that would establish a Congressional commission to investigate the 2001 anthrax attacks and the federal government’s response to and investigation of the attacks. Holt is introducing the bill on the same day that the National Academy of Sciences issued its report raising questions about the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) scientific conclusions in the “Amerithrax” case. He first introduced the legislation in September 2008.

“The NAS report makes clear there are still questions to be answered and still lessons to be learned about the FBI’s investigation into the attacks,” Holt said. “It would take a credulous person to believe the circumstantial evidence that the FBI used to draw its conclusions with such certainty. The FBI has not proven to me that this is an open and shut case. We still badly need a 9/11-style commission to determine how the attacks happened and whether we learned the lessons to prepare for another attack.”

The 11-member bipartisan commission would investigate the attacks, assess the federal government’s response to and investigation of the attacks, and make recommendations to the President and Congress on how the country can best prevent or respond to a future bioterror attack. Just as the 9/11 Commission looked not only at the attacks of that morning, but also at recommended changes in the structure of government agencies, screening methods, and Congressional oversight, an anthrax commission would look not only at the attacks, but also measures for prevention, detection, and investigation of any future bio-terrorism.

The commission would consider scientific, technical evidence as well as classified evidence the NAS did not examine.

The 2001 attacks evidently originated from a postal box in Holt’s Central New Jersey congressional district, disrupting the lives and livelihoods of many of his constituents. Holt has

consistently raised questions about the federal investigation into the attacks.

“Too many questions remain about the anthrax attacks and the government’s bungled response to the attacks,” Holt said. “A high level commission, like the 9/11 Commission, would be a start-to-finish examination of the many outstanding questions, and it would help American families know that the government is prepared to protect them and their children from future bioterrorism attacks.”

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