

(Washington, D.C.) – Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today met with a committee of the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) and asked them to conduct a thorough, wide-ranging investigation of the FBI’s scientific methods in response to the 2001 anthrax 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. Earlier this year, Holt introduced the Anthrax Attacks Investigation Act of 2009, legislation that would establish a Congressional commission to investigate the attacks and the federal government’s response to and investigation of the attacks. The bipartisan commission would make recommendations to the President and Congress on how the country can best prevent and respond to any future bioterrorism attack.

“Simply stated, our government – and specifically, the FBI – suffers from a credibility gap on this issue,” Holt said. “Answering all the doubts and questions about the handling of this case is beyond the purview of this panel, which is why I’ve introduced legislation that would create a national commission to ‘investigate the investigation.’ In the meantime, this panel has an opportunity to answer some of the key questions that I and so many other Americans have about the science behind the FBI’s investigation.”

In September 2008, the FBI requested an NAS “independent review of the scientific approach used during the investigation of the 2001 *Bacillus anthracis* mailings.” On Friday, Holt reiterated his belief that the questions posed by the FBI in calling for an independent review were narrowly focused and do not test the FBI’s conclusions in the case.

In a previous letter to the NAS, Holt listed a number of questions he recommended be

answered as part of review of the Bureau's scientific methods and conclusions in the Amerithrax case, including its assertion that the spores used in the attacks could only have come from the flask used by Dr. Bruce Ivins, the Army biological warfare researcher who committed suicide shortly before the FBI planned to charge him as the perpetrator of the attacks.

“Collectively, my questions are designed to determine whether the FBI has taken every opportunity to challenge their hypothesis rather than pursuing reasoning and collection of evidence intended to confirm their hypothesis,” Holt said.

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