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WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 398: Making 9/11 a special observance day in schools
Senate Committee on Committee on Government Operations,
Legal Review and Consumer Protection
Wednesday, August 25, 2021

Chair Stroebel and committee members,

Thank you for scheduling this hearing. Shortly after Representative James approached my office about this bill, I was struck by the fact that while the interns in my office were alive 20 years ago, they were too young to have any memory of the devastating attacks committed by terrorists on 9/11. More importantly, they also have no memories of the heroic efforts of our fellow Americans who ran to the wreckage and destruction to come to the aid of those in need. Furthermore, we are now far enough removed from 9/11 that no K-12 students were alive 20 years ago on that terrible day.

Wisconsin currently has twenty-one special observance days, starting with Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on January 15 through Veterans Day on November 11 each year. These days make a variety of historic events and figures more accessible to students throughout our state and the bravery of firefighters and police officers on 9/11 merits inclusion among these days. It is our collective memory and experience that creates much of our shared identity as a nation, and I know highlighting the events of 9/11 and the heroic response would be a valuable addition for students in Wisconsin.

As 9/11 and its seismic effects are still felt today and have a lasting impact on world affairs, it is imperative that we take time to reflect and teach Wisconsin students what happened.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions from committee members.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

JESSE JAMES

August 25th, 2021

Representative Jesse James' Testimony in Support of SB 398

Thank you Chairman Stroebel and other committee members for holding this hearing on our 9/11 legislation. This legislation adds September 11th to the list of special observance days that apply to general school operations. I did not know there were 21 other special observance days until a school official inquired about adding September 11 to this list.

It is hard for me to think we are approaching two decades since the worst terrorist attack on US soil took place. The 9/11 terrorist attacks killed 2,977 people and injured thousands at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in Somerset County, Pennsylvania. Commemorative events are held at all three sites on the anniversary of the attacks. I remember exactly where I was on September 11, 2001. I was exactly five months into my law enforcement career. I was called into the Village of Elmwood for extra patrol and protection. I remember coming into work and seeing the cars lined up from all directions as they waited for gas, filling up their tanks, gas cans, etc. People were on edge, asking me questions about attacks, and what they should do. Some thought we were going to war, others thought it was the end of the world. It was a scary time for all of us.

According to this proposal, it will be up to each school and district as to how they choose to remember the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001. I looked online at the 9/11memorial.org website. I am hoping this would be a resource for those teachers who would want to incorporate this special observance day into their curriculum. I found a number of lesson plans on this site for grades 3-12 that address the 9/11 attacks, their ongoing repercussions, and the history of the World Trade Center. Resources like this will hopefully make this an easy addition for teachers.

It is not the tragedy of September 11, 2001 that we must remember, but the feeling of unity we felt on September 12, 2001. We will not forget! Thank you for this hearing and I look forward to pushing this legislation forward.



August 25, 2021

Members of the Committee on Government Operations, Legal Review and Consumer Protection,

Twenty years ago, terrorist attacks shook America. Remembering the attacks and the impact on American society is crucial. The Wisconsin 9/11 Memorial & Education Center in Kewaskum, Wis., was built to remember the victims, honor those who responded, celebrate the resilience of our communities and country, and educate future generations.

As a memorial and education center, we strive to keep the history alive for the next generation. The Wisconsin 9/11 Memorial & Education Center remembers the direct victims of the attack, first responders, military personnel, family members, and others who moved our country forward in the face of tragedy.

Just this week, the Wisconsin 9/11 Memorial & Education Center [released sample lesson plans to internalize the local impact on school children even twenty years later](#). The lesson plans are age appropriate and will assist school districts to implement this legislation. As a part of the Memorial's mission to educate future generations, we have worked with area K-12 educators to develop lesson plans and visitor activities to help students understand and reflect on the attacks on America on September 11, 2001. The lesson plans identify the Wisconsin state standards to which they align.

Wisconsin observes historical figures and dates in schools. The history and influence of these terrorist attacks cannot be forgotten even the further we advance from 2001.

As a board, we strongly support this legislation. We thank the authors for bringing this forward and we are ready to accept the challenge of assisting all Wisconsin schools with their local observations to reflect on the 9/11 attacks.

The Wisconsin 9/11 Memorial & Education Center is open for visits. We look forward to hosting generations of visitors.

Respectfully submitted,

Wisconsin 9/11 Memorial & Education Center Board of Directors