Mr. President, I remember Tuesday, September 11, very

clearly.

Room 219 is where Senator Daschle held his Tuesday morning leadership

meeting, which started at 9 o'clock. I was the first Senator in that

room. John Breaux of Louisiana came in a short time later, and he said:

Something is going on in New York. Flip on the TV. And we did, and

there was a tower burning, and we were thinking, how could an airplane

run into that tower?

We basically didn't pay any attention to that TV. We turned it off

because there was a meeting there. We assembled for a meeting, Senator

Daschle called it to order, and just a short time after the meeting was

started, he got a note. Somebody came in and took him out, and he came

in and said: We have to vacate the building. There is an airplane

headed toward the Capitol. So of course we all hurriedly left 219.

I remember that day so very clearly. Senator Nickles was my

Republican counterpart, Senator Trent Lott was Senator Daschle's

counterpart, and the four of us were taken off the west front of the

Capitol to a secret location, where we spent most all the day. The Vice

President was there and kept us informed as to what was going on. As we

left 219, Mr. President, you could look out the window and see the

smoke billowing out of the Pentagon.

It was a very difficult day for all of us. Yesterday, we observed the

10th anniversary of those attacks, but the truth is I remember that day

as if it were only yesterday. That day, Osama bin Laden and his radical

followers didn't just launch an attack on planes or buildings. They

launched an attack on the American spirit. They launched an attack on

our freedom and our democracy.

Rather than being crippled by the terrible acts of those madmen,

rather than allowing uncertainty and fear to rule us, this Nation was

again stronger than ever. And we really did it in one way, and that was

by coming together. The darkness that day reminded us of our collective

strength and power. It reminded us that there is nothing we cannot

achieve together, as one Nation under God, indivisible, and, of course,

with liberty and justice for all. So we pledged to bring justice to the

perpetrators of those terrible acts, and we followed through on that

pledge with an unfaltering campaign to dismantle al-Qaida and its

supporters. This year, our brave Navy SEALs and others gave Osama bin

Laden his due. We also pledged to rebuild, and I am very happy to see

the proud towers of the new World Trade Center rising from the ashes of

Ground Zero.

That doesn't mean the memory of that day is not painful, because it

is, especially to those who lost loved ones.

Thousands of people lost loved ones. Nothing could ever make up for the

loss of a mother or father, son or daughter, brother or sister, friend,

or a spouse who was just catching a plane, going to work, or at work on

that horrific day. They are the reason we will never forget--ever.

So today, as yesterday, I honor the memory of the thousands of

innocent people who died at the World Trade Center, at the Pentagon, on

the hijacked planes in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. I honor

the memory of the firefighters who knew the danger they faced when they

entered those buildings but went in anyway. I honor the police and

rescue workers who rushed to the scene and combed through the debris,

some of whom died that day. I honor the many dedicated members of our

Armed Forces, our State Department, the U.S. Agency for International

Development, and our intelligence community who have sacrificed their

lives to keep us safe and keep September 11 from ever happening again.

Today, at approximately 6 o'clock, we will gather on the east front

of the Capitol. In looking at the program, I see the final thing that

will happen there is one of the military bands and choir will sing

``God Bless America.'' That happened on September 11. Senator Daschle

and I had come back, and we gathered on the front of the Capitol. We

really were there not knowing what to do; we just wanted to be

together. As I remember, Senator Mikulski said in her usual voice,

which demands attention, ``Let's sing `God Bless America.' '' And we

did. I don't know how well we sang it, but it was a memorable event. So

I will remember that very clearly tonight when we close our recognition

ceremony out there on the east front of the Capitol singing ``God Bless

America''--something we did 10 years ago.

Mr. President, I honor America's spirit of perseverance and

commitment to freedom. May we never forget.