

**Collins-Lieberman**  
**Intelligence Reform Proposal**  
Senator Joe Lieberman  
September 15, 2004

Prepared For Delivery

Thank you, Senator Collins. It's been a pleasure to work with you on these critical reforms that are so necessary to fill the gaps in the nation's intelligence network that were disastrously exploited by terrorists on September 11, 2001.

In its report, the 9/11 Commission indicted the status quo in America's intelligence community and insisted on fundamental, revolutionary changes. In the bill Senator Collins and I will put before our committee next Tuesday, those fundamental revolutionary changes are embraced and implemented. Our bill adopts the two Commission proposals which its leaders have called the most urgent and important – the creation of a National Intelligence Director and a National Counterterrorism Center.

Good intelligence is central to our ability to secure our nation from terrorists and to see and hear their threats before they strike. We are capable of gathering very good intelligence – witness the wide range of information in our possession prior to 9/11 that has been described in intricate detail by the 9/11 Commission. We had the information – scattered among several intelligence agencies throughout the government. But we did not have the organization to put it together to create an intelligible picture of the true nature of the threat we faced. It was this lack of unity that allowed so much good intelligence to slip through our grasp and the terrorists to evade our defenses.

Our purpose, therefore, in producing this legislation, is to upend the status quo and advance a new strategic vision – and a new organizational structure - so we will never again have to explain how something like September 11 could have happened.

Our bipartisan proposal will reorganize many of our intelligence agencies to create a unified command and control structure so that one person – the new National Intelligence Director - is in charge and accountable for the nation's intelligence operations. Under our plan, when someone asks “who's in charge?” the question will not be met with blank stares and non-answers, as the 9/11 Commission found when it asked that question during the course of its investigation. The answer will be “The NID is in charge and therefore is responsible for what works and what fails.”

We are also creating a National Counterterrorism Center to ensure a level of collaboration and cooperation in the war on terror that did not exist before 9/11. This center will have both analytic and operational planning authority for counterterrorism initiatives, giving it both the brains and the brawn to get the job done.

To complement this restructuring, we would also give the NID the power to create a series of national intelligence centers to be staffed by the best and the brightest from all

the agencies and organized topically, or geographically, according to our most pressing intelligence needs.

Our proposal encompasses other recommendations as well - including an executive branch oversight board to help ensure the protection of the civil liberties of all Americans, and an information-sharing network to promote the wide-spread dissemination of terrorist information throughout the federal government. I fully expect that additional recommendations from the Commission included in legislation Senator McCain and I have introduced will be offered as amendments during Senate floor debate and I hope many of them will pass.

In our work, Senator Collins and I have kept in mind that our Committee's mission is more important than any one person's portfolio or any one agency's traditions. The urgency of our times demands prompt and considered action in the national interest. We are a nation at war, and we must maximize our ability to defend ourselves. We are confident this proposal will do that.

Thank you.