

*Remarks for the
State Fire Academy 9/11 Memorial Service
September 11, 2002*

(recognize Pastor Robinson, Father Ruane, Lt. Gov. Tuck, Chief Lariviere)

I am proud to be here this morning – proud to be here as we remember the events of September 11, 2001, and in particular to thank the men and women who serve our communities as firefighters.

On September 30 of last year, I stepped off a bus on East 13th Street in New York City with five other governors and the mayor of Washington, and walked into the firehouse of Ladder Company 3.

Twelve men from that company were lost on September 11, and their photos greeted us as we walked into the house.

Most of the company was out on a call that day, so we visited with the station chief. The flowers, the food, and the cards and posters were evidence of the local community's response to their heroism.

Boots still covered in the dust and ash of Ground Zero stood to the side as silent reminders of the sacrifices of twelve men from Ladder Company 3.

When the men returned, the chief explained to them who we were and why we were there.

These firemen – these heroes of 9/11 – quietly walked up to shake our hands and embrace us.

They knew we were there for them – just as we are here for our firemen today.

The men and women who train at this academy know the danger is inherent in their work. They are well aware of the risks they will take and the fears they will face. They need to be aware of our appreciation for them and for their dedication to our safety.

That dedication is seen in the opening words of The Fireman's Prayer, found in the program –
“When I am called to duty, God, wherever flames may rage, give me strength to save some life, whatever be its age.”

Before 9/11, I think we may have forgotten how much we need heroes – and how close they truly are to us every day.

The events of one year ago today changed that thinking for us all.

Will Rogers once said, “we can’t all be heroes, because someone has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by.” Americans are sitting on the curb for the men and women of our nation’s fire departments, police departments and emergency responder agencies – and they’re clapping their hearts out.

May God bless the men and women who keep us safe – and may God bless America.