



## **Freedom Flag Foundation Case Statement of Support**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The events of September 11, 2001 have left a devastating trail of pain and anguish on the American landscape and its people unlike any event since the attack on Pearl Harbor. American citizens have relied on extraordinary resilience, ingenuity, and tenacity to overcome and combat the hatred of those who seek to destroy the very essence of who we are.

While Americans have risen to the call to remember those who perished on the morning of September 11, 2001, the Freedom Flag Foundation has embarked on a campaign to establish a national symbol that would become the unified point of remembrance for all the events of 9-11.

Over the past nine years, Mr. Melito, of his own volition, has worked diligently to share his Freedom Flag with deserving individuals and groups across the country. Many have come to recognize this flag as an important icon. 1500 schools now raise the flag each September as a tribute to that tragic day. Some family members of those who died graciously and thankfully have accepted Freedom Flags from Mr. Melito. Organizations such as fire and police have obtained Freedom Flags as a way to honor their own.

However, the overwhelming feelings that Americans shared that day have begun to fade. Where are the emotions of shock, anger, fear, and helplessness that lent themselves to a united resolve on the part of all citizens to defend and cherish the liberties we enjoy? Has 9-11 become just another historical event in our history? The Freedom Flag Foundation is committed to establishing a permanent program and symbol that will keep 9-11 in the minds and hearts of Americans forever.

To accomplish this goal the Freedom Flag Foundation has authorized a critically important and needs-based fund development initiative. This initiative will:

- \* Strive to have the Freedom Flag designated as THE national symbol of remembrance for 9-11.
- \* Allow the Foundation to expand its program so that current and future generations of children and students will be knowledgeable of this event via a national educational curriculum.
- \* Enable the Foundation to honor deserving students with valuable educational scholarships, particularly those students from families who lost loved ones on 9-11.
- \* Allow the Foundation to always remain responsive to efforts that will provide Freedom Flags, information, materials, and projects that will keep the remembrance of the 9-11 attack forever strong and vivid.

The initial objectives of this fund development campaign are to raise approximately two million dollars over the next two years. A significant portion of funds will be used to build a 1.3 million "Freedom Flag 9-11 Monument" here in the Greater Richmond area.

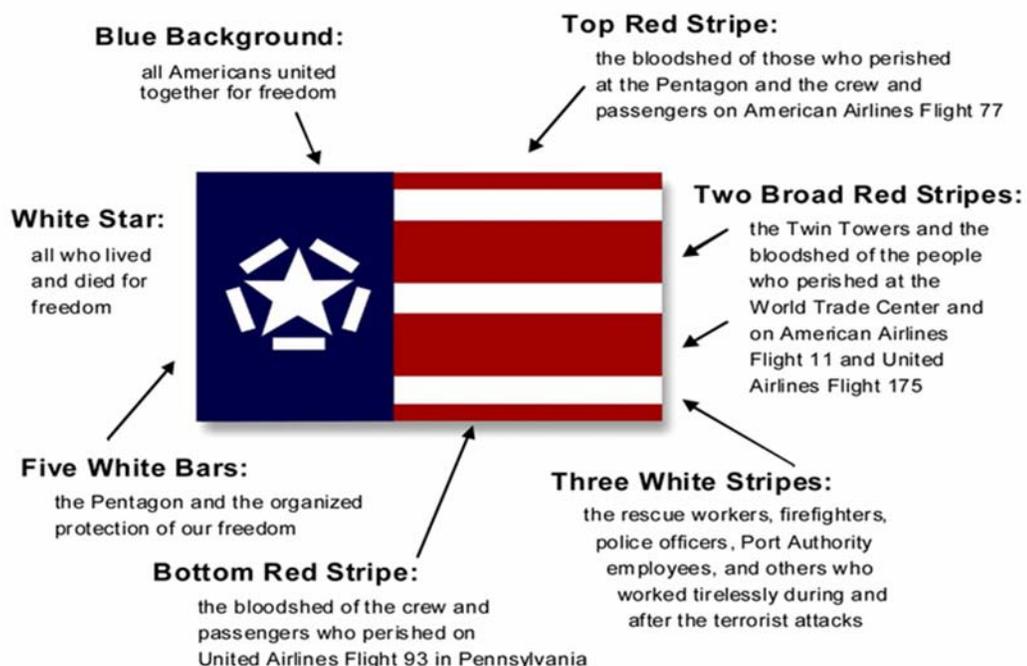
## HISTORY

The Freedom Flag was designed and created by Richard N. Melito of Richmond, Virginia to memorialize the victims of the horrific events of September 11, 2001. The first flags were sewn by Richmond flag maker Mary Cardinal, daughter of dress maker Margaret Sanchez from Long Island, New York.

In the days following the attack on America, Mr. Melito struggled with the same emotions that all Americans were feeling: shock, grief, anger and fear. Mercifully, time softens the jagged edges of our collective sorrow. Our nation began to come to terms with a new world reality, and we returned to our lives and routines. Yet, like so many Americans, Mr. Melito felt a powerful need to honor and remember the thousands of souls who perished on September 11<sup>th</sup>. He also wanted to acknowledge the pain and suffering of the survivors – those who lost loved ones and those who lived through the attacks.

In mid-September 2001, Mr. Melito designed the Freedom Flag. His initial thought was to create a symbol to use in his restaurant that would remind every patron who walked through his door of the 9-11 attacks. He desired that those lives lost and those heroes born should never, ever be forgotten. On the evening of September 17<sup>th</sup>, he drew the outline of a flag on a cocktail napkin. Using the familiar colors of red, white and blue, he placed these colors upon the symbols he drew. He then contacted a local flag maker and working from his rough sketch, had her sew together the various designed symbols and colors to create The Freedom Flag. This flag has never been intended as a replacement for the American flag, but rather a flag that would act as a specific reminder of the 9-11 tragedy.

On October 25, 2001 the first three flags were sewn by Mary Cardinal. Richard Melito, on insightful advice, then presented the Freedom Flag to Dr. Charles F. Bryan, Jr., Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Virginia Historical Society. The wife of the Governor, First Lady Roxanne Gilmore also expressed interest in the flag. In November 2001, the Historical Society was working on putting together a major exhibit depicting the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. This exhibit and the Historical Society were in partnership with The Smithsonian Institute of Washington, DC. The flag so impressed Dr. Bryan that the Historical Society on November 12, 2001 officially adopted The Freedom Flag as the center piece of its upcoming 2002 memorial exhibition. At that moment, The Freedom Flag became a part of American history and this symbol of remembrance created for personal use, suddenly took on a life of its own.



## ADDRESSING THE NEED

The events of September 11, 2001 forever changed the landscape of United States foreign policy and its role in the world. The importance of securing ourselves and other free nations against those who would use terror and murderous ideology to enslave us should never be forgotten. While each year on the 9-11 anniversary, it can be counted on to see groups of Americans across the country stop and pause to remember those who lost their lives that September in 2001. Some groups may even have specific activities such as flag raising ceremonies and speeches. Our country has established monuments at the Pentagon and Pennsylvania field sites. Unfortunately, a decade later the country still awaits the erection of a monument at ground zero in New York.

While the aforementioned monuments and events are a natural outpouring of the desire for Americans to remember 9-11, there is not one unified and consistent symbol of this horrific event for which all of America can identify. Additionally, most historical events over time fade from the consciousness of people. Because a decade has passed, the tragedy of 9-11 has already begun to lose its emotional and patriotic impact.

In that first year following the terrorists' attacks, America was draped in red, white, and blue. Tens of millions of cars displayed magnetic flags and stickers of "Old Glory." Homes in every corner of this country raised American flags as did businesses and public buildings. America was united in its struggle to overcome the attacks and forever prove its strength and resiliency. This event like no other in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must not only be remembered, but our country must maintain a vivid and clear understanding of what this historical attack on the United States means, particularly for future generations.

The ramifications are significant for not having September 11, 2001 chronicled as an educational need. Generations of school children and students must be enlightened so that they can continue to carry the mantle of America's greatness forward. The history of 9-11 will provide the means for future generations to avoid complacency about our freedoms and sustain their drive and duty to protect these freedoms even in the face of evil and terrorism.

In light of the issues above, the Freedom Flag Foundation is pursuing a course of action that will ultimately see the Freedom Flag as the national symbol for 9-11. Concomitantly, one goal of our strategic plan is to have the events of 9-11 chronicled in text books and curricula of every school system in the United States. Another major goal already in progress is the building of a Virginia 9-11 monument (see rendering below). This monument will be a memorial to all victims of September 11, 2001. Future plans include creating academic scholarships for deserving students, particularly for the children and descendants of those families who lost loved ones that terrible day, and the distribution of Freedom Flags to schools, individuals and organizations throughout the United States. September 11, 2001 was a day when America suffered the most devastating attack on its soil in our entire history. The Freedom Flag Foundation has seized upon the opportunity to ensure that this attack will never fade from the minds of all freedom loving Americans.

## POISED FOR THE CHALLENGE (FREEDOM FLAG FOUNDATION'S UNIQUE ROLE)

The need for a national symbol is vital for America's collective conscious, and the time is now. The Freedom Flag Foundation is positioned to meet this incredibly important and distinctive role in American history. The foundation has taken major steps in forwarding and promoting the uniqueness of the Freedom Flag. In November 2001, the Freedom Flag was officially adopted by the Virginia Historical

Society as a major element of a special exhibition in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institute to commemorate the events of September 11, 2001. Two years later, then Governor Mark Warner designated the flag as the state of Virginia's official symbol of remembrance honoring the victims and heroes of 9-11.

The Freedom Flag's popularity has continued to grow in Virginia and even across the country. It is now enmeshed as part of over 1,500 public and private elementary and secondary schools in Virginia. Many more schools and homes beyond Virginia's borders also display the flag on September 11<sup>th</sup> each year. It has even been recognized by millions via a national talk radio program. In addition to these accomplishments, the Freedom Flag Foundation currently is working in partnership with the county of Henrico, Virginia to build a majestic monument as a remembrance of 9-11 with the Freedom Flag as the centerpiece of this tribute.



## STRATEGIC GOALS AND PRIORITY FUNDRAISING OBJECTIVES

The Freedom Foundation has adopted a comprehensive strategic plan. This plan represents the foundation's vision and direction for establishing the Freedom Flag as the national symbol of remembrance for September 11<sup>th</sup>, its goal of on-going education of our country's youth on the importance of this major tragedy, and the building of a 9-11 monument in Virginia. This vision and mission can only be manifested if adequate financial resources are available.

To accomplish these challenges, the Freedom Flag Foundation has launched several outreach and fund development projects. Over the next two years a major goal will be the implementation and completion of our initial comprehensive fundraising campaign. This campaign will include a Major Donor initiative, implementation of our "Remember 9-11" annual pledge campaign; the starting an endowment fund, special events, grant proposals targeting government funds and private foundations, planned giving, and special campaigns such as our "Donate a Brick" initiative for the Freedom Flag 9-11 memorial monument. The foundation will need significant contributions from all these efforts to support the following initiatives:

## **1. Establishment of the Freedom Flag as the National Symbol**

One of the most important goals of The Freedom Flag Foundation is to have the Freedom Flag officially recognized as America's national symbol for 9-11. Our country needs a lasting symbol that will remind generations to come that our freedom is a precious and fragile gift. Already, this flag has been designated by the Governor as Virginia's state symbol of remembrance. As part of this goal, the foundation will endeavor to present a Freedom Flag to all families of victims of the 9-11 attack.

## **2. National Educational Curriculum**

The Freedom Flag has been distributed to over 1,500 schools in Virginia and many schools in other states. The response by students and educators toward this simple symbol has been overwhelmingly positive. But the flag symbol is not enough. Future generations of students at all levels must be exposed to the significance of this greatest attack on American soil in our history. Therefore, the foundation has a goal of establishing a national educational curriculum appropriate for all grade levels. Curricula would be developed for public and private schools as well as homeschoolers. The educational information would focus on the background leading up to 9-11, the accounts of the attack itself, the ramifications of this event, and the need to always be vigilant and protective of our liberties and freedoms.

Costs related to this initiative will be part of the operational support budget.

## **3. Erection of the Freedom Flag 9-11 Monument**

The purpose of building the Virginia 9-11 monument is to establish a memorial site to honor all victims of September 11, 2001. Here in the county of Henrico, Virginia, the Board of Supervisors has given approval for the proposed monument to be erected in western Henrico County near Parham and Ridge Roads. The goal of the Freedom Foundation is to have this memorial monument completed with an unveiling ceremony on September 11, 2011 on the tenth anniversary of this tragic event.

Construction costs for the monument will be 1.23 million

## **4. Establishment of Scholarships**

The foundation will continue to seek funds and opportunities to make scholarships available to deserving students. In particular, it is our objective to have scholarships targeted to the children and descendants of the victims of 9-11.

The amounts of scholarships and the number awarded each year will grow as an endowment fund is fully established. \$10,000 - \$25,000 annually is the goal for distribution in the first few years.

## **5. Foundation Operational Support**

The Freedom Flag Foundation will maintain development campaigns seeking support for its overall operations. The distribution of flags across the country, maintaining the upkeep of the Virginia 9-11 memorial, staffing, and day to day operations necessitate that a comprehensive plan be implemented and sustained in order to meet these needs. These needs are currently estimated to be \$240,000 a year for administrative and operational expenses.

## NEXT STEPS

In an effort to fully support the strategic plan, The Freedom Foundation has strengthened its governance structure. In order to promote strong leadership, dedication and efficiency, the governance structure includes additional board members who bring expertise, influence and energy to our cause. The Freedom Flag Foundation has maintained its 501(c)(3) status since August 2002. Currently, the board has elected officers and is organized into eight different committees. These are the Executive, Finance, Governance, Development, Nominations, Volunteer, Flags for the Nations, and the 9-11 Remembrance Monument committees. The foundation will continue to seek out dynamic individuals of influence and affluence for continued board growth.

## BENEFITS AND CONCLUSION

The gratification of knowing that the events of September 11, 2001 will be forever etched into the collective fabric of American history in dynamic and memorable ways is incomparable. Our donors are contributing to a cause that will forever resonate with patriotic pride knowing that they have had a voice in maintaining the awareness and importance of this cause. By supporting the Freedom Flag Foundation and its initiatives, contributors now have a symbol they can hold on to. The Freedom Flag is a tangible piece of that day in September 2001 that they can call their own.

Already, many schools, groups and individuals across the U.S. have obtained a Freedom Flag. However, the Freedom Flag has become a special symbol for the families who have thus far received a flag in memory of their loved ones lost on September 11, 2001. Friends of recipient families have described the feelings of those family members as being overwhelmed that a group of citizens would work so hard and so diligently to create a lasting symbol representing their personal loss. They also feel honored that this same group would seek national recognition and status for this symbol.

The Freedom Flag Foundation highly values its supporters. Contributors will be appropriately recognized in publications like our annual report. The foundation makes available a variety of giving and recognition opportunities. Contributors may become members of a new Honor Club that recognizes individuals and organizations whose gifts are of leadership dimension. But mostly, contributors will have the immense satisfaction of supporting a cause that will resonate forever as a part of our country's history and heritage.

For our contributors and for every citizen, the Freedom Flag will remind all who view it of that difficult day in American history. It will remind Americans of the ultimate sacrifice of so many of their fellow citizens in the on-going struggle to defeat a merciless enemy. And the Freedom Flag will fly along with the American Flag alerting us to the present dangers of which we must constantly be aware in order to protect our most cherished freedoms.