

Susan Brooks: Americans deserve all the facts on Benghazi

Susan W. Brooks 12:49 p.m. EDT May 23, 2014



We have a responsibility to protect and care for those who selflessly dedicate their lives to the service of our country. This is why I said yes when Speaker John Boehner asked me to join the Select Committee on the Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi.

It's a solemn responsibility, but one that is critical to ensuring the safety of the 13,000 Foreign Service officers and tens of thousands of American contractors stationed in 285 diplomatic posts around the world.

I take on this new assignment with the same commitment to fairness and truth that guided my service when I was U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana. In that role, I was charged with enforcing and defending the laws that govern our great nation. It was a task that required a firm commitment to uncovering facts – all of them – and holding people accountable for their actions.

As my colleague and Select Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy has said, facts are not Republican or Democrat. And when it comes to the terrorist attack that killed four Americans at our consulate in Benghazi, Libya, the American people deserve to know all of the relevant facts.

We need to know if security at our embassy was adequate and why requests for additional security to protect more than 30 Americans at a key diplomatic post were denied. We need to know whether our military response was sufficient and timely. We need to know why some members of the administration were slow to fully acknowledge a terrorist attack had actually occurred.

Several House committees have explored these issues and they've done excellent work. But I believe a select committee is warranted and necessary in explaining exactly what happened before, during and after the attack.

It's warranted because when four Americans serving their country die on foreign soil we have a duty to uncover the whole truth. It's simply not acceptable for so many unanswered questions to still exist.

A select committee is necessary because its oversight responsibilities are not limited by traditional House committee jurisdictional boundaries. Our select committee will have broad investigative authority and have access to classified material normally available only to the Intelligence Committee.

To cohesively piece together the full picture of the attack on our consulate, we will take further depositions while compiling classified information and public witness testimony from other committees. We will complete every task carefully, and like any solid investigation, much of the work will be done without the presence of television cameras.

When hearings are held, they will be free of the five minute time limit that currently controls the questioning of witnesses during standard House proceedings. It's vital we have the time necessary to ask every question that needs to be answered.

On Monday, our nation will gather to remember the heroes from each generation who've lost their lives protecting our freedom. Memorial Day is a solemn reminder that preserving our exceptional democracy often comes with a heavy cost. For many families, it's a time to mourn the loss and celebrate the courage of their own relatives who made the ultimate sacrifice wearing our military uniforms.

This Memorial Day, I'll also be thinking of Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods, two former armed forces members we lost on Sept. 11, 2012 in Benghazi. I'll be thinking about the Americans in Benghazi they were trying to protect, including Ambassador Chris Stevens and Foreign Service Officer Sean Smith. These men were public servants who believed in a greater cause. They were also fathers, sons, friends, colleagues and neighbors.

The people who knew them deserve the truth. The government they served has a duty to provide the truth.

Brooks represents Indiana's 5th District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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