

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 25, 2004

Chairman Thomas Kean
Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton
National Commission on Terrorist Attacks
Upon the United States
301 7th Street, SW
Room 5125
Washington, DC 20407

Dear Chairmen Kean and Hamilton,

Thank you for the revealing and successful two days of hearings here in Washington this week. Like you, I was disappointed that the only significant figure missing from the event was current National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. It is my understanding that the White House will request that Dr. Rice be given the opportunity to interview with the Commission. I'm writing to urge you to reject this request unless Dr. Rice agrees to testify in public and under oath.

As a result of testimony given at the recent public hearings, the White House will reportedly request today that Dr. Rice be given another opportunity to interview with the Commission to expand upon her four hours of discussions on February 7, 2004. While the public is very eager to hear Dr. Rice's responses to the recent hearings, I believe her testimony will only prove valuable if like Defense Secretaries Cohen and Rumsfeld, Secretaries of State Albright and Powell and former National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, she gives it in public and under oath.

I am sure you will agree that the public and sworn testimony from the principal security officials in charge of defending our national security in the Clinton and Bush Administrations was responsible for the success of the hearings. These proceedings gave the public insider access to the course of events that led to the September 11 attacks from the people directly responsible for protecting the country during that time. Like Sandy Berger, Dr. Rice has intimate knowledge of these events and has a special obligation to share it with the American people.

You have both publicly supported this position, noting your disappointment that she would not appear publicly and under oath before the Commission on February 25, 2004, especially given her unique perspective. It is unfortunate that the White House does not see this and has refused to permit Dr. Rice to appear publicly to testify under oath, citing executive privilege and the separation of powers. Putting aside that the Commission is independent of Congress and adequate precedent exists for serving National Security Advisors to appear before Congress, the White House's decision is puzzling because Dr. Rice continues to appear on numerous morning shows and evening news programs during these proceedings.

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In their wisdom, the Founding Fathers decided that our nation would be governed for the people and by the people and so our democracy provides all Americans with open access to their government. The recent success of the Commission's hearings shows how well this system works. Accordingly, any further discussions Dr. Rice has with the Commission should include sworn, public testimony in order to allow the American people and the families of the 9-11 victims to gain a full understanding of her role and the role of the Bush Administration in the events surrounding the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Schumer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "C".

Charles Schumer
U.S. Senator