



Transcript of remarks made by Richard Hughes at the Liberty Bonds Hearing on 12/3/09

Good evening. My name is Richard Hughes. My colleague Margaret Donovan here and I are two of the founders of the Twin Towers Alliance, a grass-roots organization that has led the fight for new Twin Towers as the most popular and the most cost-effective solution to the devastation at Ground Zero as well as the course that would best heal our still-wounded city and nation.

With all due respect to the committee, I don't know why any hearings are held on the future of Ground Zero at all since the public is never listened to. Yesterday's approval of the Silverstein Liberty Bonds *before* the required public hearing on the request is just one more instance of the arrogance and irresponsibility that has characterized the so-called rebuilding effort at Ground Zero for the past eight years.

The fact is that both the majority of New Yorkers and the majority of the American people have never been behind the current plan and never will be. The fact is the majority of us have always wanted to see new Twin Towers rise at Ground Zero. Just this past spring an MSNBC poll had 90% of the respondents saying they preferred new Twin Towers to the Freedom Tower.

But instead, here we are talking about putting the American taxpayer on the hook for billions of dollars so a billionaire developer can build something neither the markets nor the people want. We the taxpayers have already thrown billions of dollars into a sixteen-acre money pit and now we're being asked to throw down billions of dollars more.

And let's make no mistake about this. The taxpayers *are* on the hook for these bond-financed projects. Given what we've been through economically this past year and given the stupidity of the current plan for Ground Zero, the taxpayers have every right to be concerned whether they will ultimately have to bail out yet another ill-conceived idea that has been jammed down their throats by entrenched politicians, their special-interest supporters, and a compliant media.

We are being asked to guarantee a plan that won't work, can't work, and which only a few people even want to see work. One supremely arrogant man, Gov. George Pataki, imposed this plan on us against the popular will and yet we are still being asked to pay for it.

May I remind those present that Mr. Silverstein was contractually obligated to rebuild the Twin Towers if they were destroyed, and that if he had been held to his contract, he wouldn't have to ask for this money now. New Twin Towers would have risen years ago at Ground Zero and for a lot less money than the current plan.

Not only was rebuilding the Twin Towers what Mr. Silverstein was required to do by law, it was far and away the most popular option. Now, thanks to colossal political arrogance and incompetence, we're saddled with a dead project that will go on being a dead project.

The current plan for Ground Zero has turned out to be the money pit of all money pits. Worse, it has turned a terrible national tragedy into a political travesty. What should have been a triumph of the American spirit has instead been turned into a symbol of political chicanery and incompetence.

We used to be the kind of city and country that when we got knocked down, we got right back up. Now it seems we just roll over for venal politicians and the special interests that support them.

Mr. Silverstein has for eight years been a big part of the problem at Ground Zero. He doesn't deserve a penny more of support from the taxpayers. His request to access these Liberty Bonds should be denied.

Margaret...