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## *House of Representatives*

### Justice Against Victims of Terrorism Act

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey... Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend, Mr. GOODLATTE, for yielding; and I want to thank Mr. GOODLATTE and Mr. KING for their extraordinary leadership on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the President of the United States, the central argument in this veto message accompanying the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act, reciprocity is weak, unsupported, and egregiously flawed.

The White House drafters of the veto message either didn't read the carefully crafted bipartisan bill or are seeking to conflate the plain legislative text since JASTA only permits access to U.S. courts by waiving immunity from foreign governments, not foreign government officials or employees, and corrects conflicting case law, except in the cases where someone knowingly aids, abets, or conspires with a State Department-designated foreign terrorist organization.

Thus, the President is wrong to assert that, under the hallowed principle of reciprocity, U.S. officials and military personnel could be subjected to lawsuits. It is worth noting that nothing precludes that now or ever, but as an argument for veto, it simply doesn't pass muster.

While sovereign immunity has its place in the conduct of responsible diplomacy, it is not

absolute, as even the 1976 Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act contains nine exceptions.

In 2008, Mr. Speaker, as you know, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit dismissed legal action against Saudi Arabia and other defendants, holding U.S. courts lacked jurisdiction.

Other actions by the courts have thwarted the full accountability Americans expect and deserve. JASTA corrects that.

The victims of 9/11 and their grieving families deserve what JASTA empowers: a judicial process to discover the unfettered and ugly truth that, to this day, remains cloaked, concealed, and covered up. JASTA provides a way to hold perpetrators and enablers of terrorism to account.

Anyone who has read the recently declassified 28 pages of findings from the House-Senate Intelligence Committee's joint inquiry in 2002, despite the heavy redactions, knows the provocative evidence of Saudi complicity in 9/11, and that remains unexamined. The 28 pages are filled with names and suspected associations with the Government of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Speaker, I have worked with and befriended many of the 9/11 surviving family members—many who died on 9/11 were from my district—

and I can state unequivocally that there would have been no 9/11 Commission and other historic policy initiatives without the 9/11 family members. They have been extraordinary, tenacious, committed, and courageous.

On September 20, many family members gathered outside the White House to appeal to the President to sign JASTA. Two of the remarkable widows from New Jersey, Lorie and

Mindy, carried this sign to my left, your right, with a picture of President Obama and Saudi King Salman from the front page of the New York Daily News.

The headline read: “Don’t choose them over us”—the U.S., the United States.

The President chose the king, and he vetoed the bill. We can correct that today. Vote to override.