



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Nearly 200 Bipartisan Leaders Of Local Governments From Across The Country Urge Congress To Permanently Fully Fund The Victim Compensation Fund For 9/11 First Responders

ANDREW J. LANZA June 11, 2019

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**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio organized nearly 200 bipartisan leaders of local governments from across the United States, representing counties and cities of all sizes, and today sent a letter to congressional leaders urging them to permanently fully fund the Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) by passing H.R. 1327/S. 546. To date, the VCF has paid out more than 22,000 claims to victims and responders killed or injured due to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and their aftermath. There are more than 95,000 responders and survivors who access medical monitoring and or health care for their 9/11 related health issues through the World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program such as respiratory conditions and cancer among other 9/11 related health issues. The letter comes at time in which VCF funding is quickly running out and while nearly 12,000 claims remain under review. The House Judiciary Committee also is holding a hearing on the need to fully fund and extend the VCF on Wednesday, June 11, 2019.

The letter sent to congressional leaders and a full list of signatories can be found [here](#).

“The thousands of people who responded to the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and their aftermath are heroes, and we cannot abandon them in their time of need,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

“Congress must fully and permanently fund the Victim Compensation Fund for 9/11 responders and their families so they can access the support they deserve. Our message to Congress is clear: do right by the very people who put their lives on the line to protect our fellow Americans and who helped us rebound into a more resilient country. I’d also like to thank New York City’s Congressional delegation for leading the fight to pass this bill, including Congressman Nadler for holding this important hearing.”

In 2015, Congress authorized and fully funded the World Trade Center Health Program, providing medical monitoring and treatment for responders and survivors with 9/11-related injuries and illnesses. Congress also reauthorized the VCF, providing an additional \$4.6 billion dollars in compensation for these victims and their families, many of whom are suffering or dying from respiratory diseases and cancer. Given the full scope of need and the record number of victims applying, the funding is quickly running out. Nearly \$5 billion has already been paid, while nearly 12,000 claims remain under review. If funding is not permanently restored, any responder or survivor who becomes ill after December 18, 2020 would be ineligible due to a lack of funding.

“This letter from over 200 local governments , organized by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, is another example of the growing bipartisan and national support for making sure that the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund has the resources it needs and is extended into the future to deal with the growing numbers of injured and ill 9/11 responders and survivors. At a time when the Congress is deeply divided, it is good to know that it can agree that “Remembering 9/11” should be more than a bumper sticker,” said **Benjamin Chevat, Executive Director Citizens for the Extension of the James Zadroga Act Inc.**

"The survivors and residents who have suffered for so long from the effects and aftermath of the 9/11attacks should not be made to suffer further," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "That's why Congress must pass a permanent extension of the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund."

“Never Forgetting our 9/11 heroes is more than annual commemoration and remembrance activities. It also means we have to make sure they have the resources they need to carry on as survivors, widowers, and first responders with chronic and health conditions. As a sponsor of H.R. 1327, I thank Mayor de Blasio for supporting our efforts in Congress to ensure 9/11 victims and their families permanently receive the compensation they need and deserve,”

said **Congressman Jose E. Serrano**.

“This letter is proof positive of why this bill has so much support in congress: there are 9/11 first responders, survivors, and victims’ families all over this country who are counting on Congress to do its job, live up to our promise to never forget, and fulfill our moral obligation to be there for these heroes. We will get this done – because we have no other choice,” said **Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, lead sponsor of the Never Forget the Heroes Act**. “Thank you to Mayor de Blasio for leading this bipartisan letter of support.”

**Congresswoman Grace Meng** said, “On September 11th, our brave first responders answered the call, and now, nearly 18 years later, we must not turn our backs on the tireless heroes who became sick from working at Ground Zero. This past Sunday, I was honored to stand with many of these rescue workers in calling for the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund to be fully funded and made permanent, and today I’m proud to reiterate that call with numerous mayors, and municipal and county leaders from across the nation. We cannot abandon our 9/11 first responders, recovery workers and survivors.”

**Congressman Max Rose** said, “When it comes to having the backs of the first responders and their families who were there for us on 9/11 and the days following, it’s not about politics – it’s about doing the right thing. I’m proud to see the House taking real action to permanently renew and fully fund the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund and hope to see the Senate follow suit with similar speed and urgency. Failure to do so is simply not an option.”

"Across New York there are thousands of heroic first responders suffering from 9/11 related health issues that require assistance in order to continue their recovery. We cannot turn our backs on the families of those who put their lives on the line to protect us – Congress must fully and permanently fund the Victim Compensation Fund and pass H.R. 11327/S. 546. I applaud the New York City congressional delegation for continuing the fight on this critical

issue," said **State Senator Alessandra Biaggi**.

**Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris** said, "The brave men and women who ran towards the terror on 9/11 deserve our appreciation and support. Reauthorizing the VCF helps them and their families receive the help they are owed."

**State Senator Brad Hoylman** said, "It is shameful that 18 years after 9/11, New York's first responders and their families are still fighting for the health care and benefits that they deserve. Congress must permanently and fully fund the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund. I commend Congressman Nadler for holding a hearing on this critically important issue, and stand with New York's Congressional delegation as they advocate for our constituents in Washington."

**State Senator Andrew Lanza** said, "The people of New York resolutely remember the heroes of September 11th. These men and women responded on that day to save lives and in the months that followed with the righteous intent of helping our City recover. They never could have envisioned the medical ailments that could befall them. Congress has stood together before to support these first responders. Today it is as important as ever that we ensure that the Victim Compensation Fund continues to serve as a lifeline to those who were there when we needed them most."

**Assembly Member Catalina Cruz** said, "Our country has a duty and a debt of gratitude to pay to the first responders and survivors who worked bravely and tirelessly in the aftermath of that horrific day. The least we can do is permanently fund this Victim's Compensation Fund. We must do whatever it takes to ensure these heroes and their families have the proper medical coverage they need and deserve. There are thousands and thousands of first responders who risked their lives on 9/11 and the tragic days thereafter for their fellow Americans. Now it is our turn to take care of them."

“Thousands of the heroic men and women who risked their own safety as first responders on 9/11 are enduring lifelong, and life-threatening, consequences as a result of their selfless actions and they should not have to worry that our federal government may abandon them in their time of need. Ensuring that these first responders receive the medical care they require, for as long as they require it, is our responsibility and duty as a nation,” said **Assembly Member Steven Cymbrowitz**. “I commend Mayor de Blasio for taking the lead on this vitally important issue.”

**Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz** said, “It is absolutely unconscionable that the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund is still waiting to be permanently fully funded by Congress. Taking care of these heroes and their families is a no-brainer, but unfortunately it appears Senate leadership would rather use this for political leverage instead of just doing the right thing. Thank you to Mayor Bill de Blasio for organizing this bipartisan coalition to remind our federal leaders what it really means to put America first.”

“Sadly, the wounds left by the September 11th attacks continue to grow as the toxic fallout from Ground Zero impacts the health of the heroic first responders. We owe it to these heroes and their families to provide them with the support they need to deal with the aftermath of this tragedy. Congress has a responsibility to act swiftly to permanently fund the Victim Compensation Fund to ensure that first responders and their families are provided for,” said **Assembly Member Harvey Epstein**.

**Assembly Member Deborah J. Glick** said, “New York’s first responders are an essential part of the City’s fabric, providing critical emergency care and ensuring our safety whenever they are called upon. The responders who gave so much on September 11, 2001 and since then, must be supported and provided with resources to access the quality health care they so deserve, and I join my colleagues in urging Congress to fully fund the Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) without delay.”

“It is crucially important that Congress permanently and fully fund the VCF for 9/11 first responders. These brave men and women who risked their lives nearly 18 years ago may just now be exhibiting health complications now, with some yet to manifest. We have a duty to ensure they all have access to whatever care is necessary in light of their courageous acts,” said **Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi**.

**Assistant Assembly Speaker Felix W. Ortiz** said, “Our 9/11 heroes need help. These responders are still suffering from an attack on our nation that took place 17 years ago. The risks they took to save lives by responding to one of our worst tragedies cannot be ignored. Illness can strike any time and treatment and recovery can take decades. I urge Congress to pass the Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) as a matter of national priority.”

“Our City’s finest and bravest who answered the call of duty on 9/11 and the aftermath that followed deserve better than to face uncertainty over mounting medical costs resulting from related illnesses,” said **Assembly Member Nily Rozic, Chair of the Office of State-Federal Relations**. “As next steps are being determined in Congress to permanently fund the VCF, we remain grateful to the leadership of Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and New York’s Congressional Delegation for putting first responders voices’ front and center.”

“The 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund represents a promise our country made to the survivors and first responders of the September 11th attacks,” said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin**.

“With the funding for this critical program set to expire next year, it is incumbent upon Congress to ensure our country delivers on this promise. As a sponsor of a NYC Council resolution in support of H.R. 1327/S. 546, which will fund the Victim Compensation fund through 2090, I am proud to join Mayor De Blasio and hundreds of local leaders to do right by the survivors who have suffered so much and need our help more than ever.”

“The escalating crisis of sick and injured seeking help through the Victims Compensation Fund must be resolved quickly and definitively,” said **Council Member I. Daneek Miller, Chair of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor**. “Last month, Council Member Margaret Chin and I introduced a resolution calling on Washington to enact Congresswoman Maloney and Senator Gillibrand’s Never Forget the Heroes Act. So, we’re encouraged to see Congress moving promptly to advance this critical measure, which, due to the efforts of our City’s own congressional delegation, enjoys broad bipartisan support. I thank House Judiciary Chair Jerrold Nadler for his leadership in securing this week’s hearing as well as Mayor de Blasio for amplifying our collective call for every afflicted responder and survivor to be properly compensated and given the peace of mind they rightly deserve.”

“Following the tragic events of 9/11, first responders immediately jumped in to provide help however they could, sacrificing their health and well-being to save lives and repair the damage done to our city and our country,” said **Council Member Donovan Richards, Chair of the Committee on Public Safety**. “It’s not enough to say ‘never forget.’ We must show these selfless heroes that we have not and will not ever forget their sacrifice by permanently and fully funding the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund.”

“We all said we would never forget. Part of not forgetting is taking care of the victims and first responders of September 11th. Congress needs to get its act together, slash the red tape and skip the politics for once. Those who are still suffering because of that day deserve to know that the Fund is permanent and not something that is going to get tossed around like a political football every few years. Let’s do the right thing for once – put everything else aside and get this done,” said **Council Member Justin Brannan**.

“With the passage of the 9/11 VCF the United States made a pledge to survivors, first responders and their families that they would receive the resources they need after their heroic actions. We cannot default on this promise and let this funding expire as many of



those affected continue to seek crucial medical services. I am proud to join Mayor de Blasio and New York City's Congressional delegation, my colleagues at New York City Council, and community leaders from across the country in calling on Congress to permanently fund the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund (H.R.1327/S.546)," said **Council Member Andrew Cohen**.

"Fully and permanently funding the Victim Compensations Fund for 9/11 responders must be a national priority," said **New York State Conference of Mayors' President Robert T. Kennedy, Mayor of the Village of Freeport**. "The health impacts on the brave responders to the attack on our nation have been felt by families in every state in our nation. NYCOM and our city and village mayors from across New York proudly stand in support of the effort to get proper and lasting funding for the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund, and we thank Mayor Bill de Blasio for his leadership in coordinating this effort."

**Mayor Thomas Roach of White Plains, New York**, said, "I urge Congress to act now to permanently fully fund the Victims Compensation Fund. First responders and their families should never be put in a position where the assistance they need and deserve is in question. It is our responsibility as a nation to take care of those who so bravely and selflessly responded to the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. This action is long overdue. Let's not waste any more time in helping those who sacrificed for us on 9/11."

**Mayor Steven Fulop of Jersey City, New Jersey**, said, "It is crucial for Congress to fund the Victim Compensation Fund for the 9/11 responders, the people who risked and even sacrificed their lives on one of the most tragic days in American history," said Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop. "The first responders are living with an array of illnesses, grief and much more stemming from this day. It is our duty as elected officials to help the selfless first responders and their families by permanently providing this necessary funding."

**Westchester County Executive George Latimer** said, “Unfortunately, the list of those who are suffering from the lasting health impacts from 9/11 continues to grow. These men and women are heroes, and right now they need our support more than ever. I urge Congress to fully and permanently fund the Victims Compensation Fund for 9/11 responders and their families. These men and women never turned their backs on us, and we must not turn our backs on them.”

**Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro** said, “The effects of the 9/11 attacks on our nation are both far-reaching and long-lasting, still adversely impacting countless first responders throughout our region to this day. In the days and months following the attacks, selfless first responders – firefighters, police officers, emergency medical technicians and so many others – put their country’s well-being above their own; many are paying horrific health consequences for their bravery, while others have since paid with their lives. Just as these first responders acted on their sense of duty around Ground Zero, so, too, must our federal government live up to its duty: protecting those who protect us all, by fully funding the Victims Compensation Fund.”

**Ed Day, Rockland County Executive**, said, “As a former member of the NYPD, I am highly sensitive to the service and sacrifice made by my fellow first responders. The United States government has a duty to ensure that those who stood tall and gave all during an act of war committed upon our nation have this fund fully supported by all Americans. To do any less for those who answered the call would be an abject disgrace.”

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