

Fact Sheet on H.R. 1327/ S. 546

Never Forget the Heroes: Permanent Authorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund Act H.R. 1372/ S. 546

The 9/11 terrorist attacks occurred 17 years ago, yet tens of thousands of 9/11 responders and survivors continue to suffer from injuries and illnesses caused by exposure to Ground Zero toxins. More and more get sick every day:

- Over 90,000 9/11 responders and survivors, from every state and from 434 of the 435 Congressional districts, are currently enrolled in the World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program.
- Over 10,000 responders and survivors have been certified as having a 9/11 related cancer, including over 2,000 New York City Firefighters and EMS personnel and *that figure is growing*.
- At some point, more people will have died from 9/11 related injuries and diseases than were lost during the attacks on 9/11.

Problem: Unless Congress acts, the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) that helps 9/11 survivors and responders will run out of funds and its Authorization will expire, before those who helped the United States on 9/11 will be able to apply and use the VCF.

After the 9/11 attack, the federal government told people that the air in lower Manhattan was safe to breathe when it was not. Too many responders and residents who relied on that information are now ill. For the initial years Washington refused to act.

But in a stunning show of bipartisan effort and will in 2011 and again in 2015, the Congress reopened and then replenished the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund for these responders and survivors who served the country at a great time of need after the attack. Since then, in Democratic and Republican administrations the Department of Justice have fairly and justly administered the Fund, especially in the last two years clearing the backlog of claims, to provide compensation to individuals or their surviving family members, who were injured, became ill, or have died as result of exposure to the toxins at Ground Zero.

Since being reopened in 2011, the Fund has received nearly 40,000 claims and made nearly 25,000 determinations for injured or killed responders and survivors, or their families. The Fund is currently scheduled to expire at the end of 2020 and the Fund's Special Master recently ordered cuts of up 50% for pending claims and 70% for future claims due to a lack of funds.

Solution: Congress has an opportunity to show how bipartisan work can do what is right for our country by enacting H.R. 1327/S. 546, The Never Forget the Heroes Act, a permanent authorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund.

This legislation makes sure that Congress keeps its promise and the United States meets the moral obligation to always be there for anyone killed, injured or sickened by the 9/11 attacks:

- Extends the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund authorization to 2090 to match the authorization for the World Trade Center Health Program.
- Authorizes the VCF to fully pay eligible claims that may have been previously reduced due to insufficient funding.

The legislation also:

- Changes the financial review period from annual to at least once every 5 years.
- Provides that the Special Master can exceed noneconomic loss limitations if there are special circumstances.
- Indexes gross income limitation to inflation once every 5 years.