

FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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March 29, 2019

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cory Gardner
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Gillibrand and Gardner:

On behalf of the over 26,000 members of the [Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association](http://www.fleoa.org), we are strongly supportive of S. 546, the Never Forget the Heroes: Permanent Authorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) Act. This is a long overdue re-authorization for a program that was promised at Ground “Hero” to the thousands of federal law enforcement officers and first responders who answered the call when our nation needed them the most. We are grateful to you both for your strong and steadfast commitment to those who have suffered and continue to suffer from the health effects caused by exposure during the September 11th, 2001 attacks against America.

On that fateful day and during the rescue and recovery efforts at Ground “Hero”, the Pentagon and Shanksville, thousands of federal law enforcement officers responded, mobilized, and assisted with the attacks aftermath. Many served at the attack locations, others served in recovery operations, and others led investigative efforts at locations like the Staten Island landfill. Each came willingly and each understood the need to show America’s best at a time when many thought it was America’s worst. As the long road of healing progressed, these federal law enforcement officers worked countless hours alongside their state and local counterparts to give back to America something many thought was taken during the attacks. The mobilization of these federal law enforcement officers was not New York, D.C., or Pennsylvania centric, federal agencies sent people from across the 50 states to each location – making the response to the attacks an American response.

Now as time has progressed, not only do we memorialize those lost each year on September 11th, but we also have started commemorating those that have been taken from us by their 9/11 exposure. Those losses have been directly attributable to the 9/11 attacks. Today the total number of federal, state, and local law enforcement officers who have died of a 9/11-related illness is more than double the 71 who perished on 9/11 in 2001. Unfortunately, these numbers are expected to continue to rise in the years ahead and as we continue to witness the long-term health effects among those who performed rescue and recovery efforts at Ground Zero.

Twice in the past decade, Congress has recognized this ongoing health crisis among 9/11 responders and survivors. First, by passing the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act in 2010 and again with the reauthorization of the Act in 2015. As part of the 2015 legislation, Congress essentially made permanent the World Trade Center Health Program by extending its authorization to monitor and treat those with 9/11-related health conditions until 2090. In the nearly four years since

the 2015 reauthorization, overall enrollment in the WTCHP has grown by nearly 19,000. Men and women from each of the 50 states and nearly every Congressional District in the nation have enrolled. These numbers highlight the foresight Congress showed in making the WTCHP permanent. Now Congress must do the same for the VCF and do so quickly. The current VCF registrations have increased and surpassed the present funding, highlighted by the recent announcement that the VCF will need to make severe cuts to award amounts to first responders and other claimants.

The legislation you have introduced will accomplish our shared goal of permanently reauthorizing the VCF and providing full compensation to the Heroes of 9/11. FLEOA is proud to stand beside you again as we work to reauthorize this critically important program, and we are grateful for your strong leadership on this issue.

Please do not hesitate to contact us as we work with you to reauthorize the VCF.

Sincerely,

Nathan R. Catura

Nathan R. Catura
National President
Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association