



Mario Cilento
President

Terrence L. Melvin
Secretary-Treasurer

April 1, 2019

Dear Representative/Senator:

On behalf of the New York State AFL-CIO's 2.5 million members, retirees and their families, I write to ask for your support for the "Never Forget the Heroes: Permanent Authorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund Act" (H.R. 1327, S.546).

In 2010, nearly a decade after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Congress enacted the James Zadroga Health and Compensation Act. In doing so, our country finally recognized that responders and survivors, many of whom were union members, were becoming sick and dying as a result of their exposures to toxins. The law created the World Trade Center Health Program and reopened the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) to provide health care and compensation to responders and survivors.

In 2015, the Health Program was made permanent and the VCF was extended for five years. Unfortunately, as the VCF nears expiration, the health crisis caused by the toxic air at Ground Zero continues to grow. More than 45,000 responders and survivors are suffering from at least one World Trade Center condition, including 10,000 cancer diagnoses. We will soon face the tragic fact that more people will have died from 9/11 related injuries and diseases than were lost during the attacks on 9/11.

The situation has been made even more dire, by the announcement of the VCF special master, that the funding allocated in 2015 is insufficient to pay claims. Awards are being cut by 50%, and in some cases 70%, which is simply devastating to responders, survivors and their families.

It is up to Congress to do the right thing by extending the VCF to 2090, providing funding as needed to pay awards, and making whole responders or survivors impacted by the current shortfall.

This is a national crisis that demands national action. Our country was attacked that day, not just New York, the Pentagon, and Shanksville. In fact, 9/11 responders and survivors live in every state and 434 out of 435 congressional districts.

Once again, I urge you to sponsor this critical legislation, and address the 9/11 health crisis once and for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mario Cilento". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mario Cilento
President

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