

Chairman Fred Upton
Opening Statement
Subcommittee on Health
“Examining H.R. 1786, the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation
Reauthorization Act”
June 11, 2015

On September 11, 2001 the world as we know it was turned upside down by unthinkable acts of violent extremism, which took the lives of nearly 3,000 individuals in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia – leaving a mark on every American. From the smoldering ruins of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon to the wreckage of United Airlines Flight 93, the painful images and heartbreaking personal stories of that day will not be forgotten. We remember the thousands of innocent lives lost and the communities of loved ones they left behind. We also honor the countless acts of heroism and leadership shown by brave American men and women in those hours of pandemonium and in the days, weeks, and months that followed.

First responders spent countless hours in air that was thick with dust and smoke digging through the rubble, and searching for survivors. The conditions were very difficult and took a toll on their health. Because of this the Federal government provided aid to those individuals who were injured or killed in the attacks through a discretionary grant program. In 2010 the Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act was signed into law which established the World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP) and the Victim Compensation Fund (VCF). Our New York colleagues Reps. Carolyn Maloney, Peter King, and Jerrold Nadler have jointly introduced H.R. 1786, the “James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act” which reauthorizes both of these programs.

At today's hearing we will focus on the World Trade Center Health Program as it is the program that falls in our Committee's jurisdiction. The WTC Health program funds networks of specialized medical programs that are designed to monitor and treat those with 9/11 related conditions. The members enrolled in the program are not only from the greater New York area, but in 2014 71,942 members enrolled in the World Trade Center Health Program from 429 out of 435 congressional districts.

Today's hearing gives us an opportunity to learn more about how the WTC Health Program has operated since its authorization in 2010 and what is needed for it to successfully operate and meet the needs of its members in the future. I would like to thank all of the witnesses for taking the time to be here today to discuss the WTC Health Program and I would like to specifically thank Officer Howley and Detective Burnette for their service to our great country and for sharing their personal stories and struggles with the Subcommittee.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and I yield back the balance of my time.