

Statement

Congressman Daniel M. Donovan, Jr. (NY-11)

Examining HR 1786, James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act

As you know, the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act would extend the World Trade Center Health Program indefinitely, providing first responders and survivors access to important medical services to treat conditions precipitated by exposure to the debris at Ground Zero.

It has been 14 years since the worst attack on our nation's soil, but for the victims and their families, it still feels like yesterday. Our first responders, rescue workers, and construction crews were a band of brothers and sisters that lifted New York City up from our knees and brought her back even greater than before. This bipartisan legislation represents the least we can do to honor the sacrifices of the first responders who answered the call to duty that day and in the weeks and months which followed.

We often think about the victims who perished that day. Our Congressional district lost 300 residents alone. But we must also remember those survivors whose lives have changed because of the attack: those suffering with debilitating illnesses, the children who not only lost a beloved parent, but their provider.

The size and scope of the World Trade Center Health Program is truly staggering. In the last year alone, 71,942 people were enrolled in the program and 20,883 program members received treatment for health conditions caused by the toxic environment around Ground Zero. According to Dr. Howard's written testimony, membership includes people from all fifty states and 429 out of 435 congressional districts. This was not a tragedy that just struck New York – it was an attack on our nation, and it is a national issue that we have a duty to solve together. This is not an issue of dollars and cents. It's an issue of right and wrong. Who are we as a nation if we aren't there for our heroes when they need us?

I strongly urge all of my colleagues to support this important legislation so we may fulfill our national obligation to those who made sacrifices on our behalf in the wake of one of the greatest tragedies in American History. Failing to do so would be an even greater tragedy for the spirit of our nation.