

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 6, 2007

Mr. Jim Nussle
Director
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Nussle,

As the sixth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks approaches, we write to urge you to carefully consider the President's Fiscal Year 2009 budget request for the World Trade Center (WTC) Responder Health Program, which has been providing much-needed medical care to the heroes and heroines of 9/11.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent collapse of the World Trade Center Towers produced the largest acute environmental disaster that ever befell New York City. Thousands of people were exposed to toxins, pulverized building materials, and other environmental contaminants in the air. Thousands of heroic responders, who rushed in to help as all others were running the other way, have become sick as a result of their work at Ground Zero. Many area residents, workers, and students are sick as well. The number of ailing 9/11 rescue and recovery workers is increasing, workers' illnesses are becoming more severe, the projected cost of treating these illnesses is surging, and current federal treatment funding levels are likely inadequate.

The WTC Responder Health Program, which is administered by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), provides federal funds to ensure that monitoring and treatment will continue for World Trade Center responders. It currently does not provide services for residents, area workers and students. The services are provided by two Centers of Excellence: the New York City Fire Department Bureau of Health Services World Trade Center Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program ("FDNY") and the consortium of clinical providers coordinated by Mt. Sinai ("the Consortium"). Serving over 37,000 responders since 2002, FDNY and the Consortium have gained significant expertise in screening, monitoring, diagnosing, and treating WTC responders. Through extensive data collection and analysis, they have contributed much to the understanding of WTC-related illnesses, including prevalence, diagnosis, and treatment of these otherwise little-understood conditions.

To date, funding for the responder's health needs has come in four waves, all through emergency spending. An initial \$12 million for screening started the program in FY 2002, followed by \$90 million for monitoring which was appropriated in FY 2004. A FY 2006 \$75 million appropriation included the first money made available for treatment.

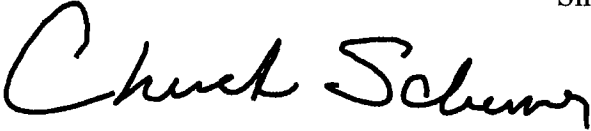
Most recently, \$50 million was included in the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007. None of the funds used to monitor or treat those exposed to Ground Zero toxins and suffering from health effects have ever been initially proposed by the Administration, and in fact many of these funds were appropriated over the Administration's objections.


The President's FY08 budget requested \$25 million for the health needs of WTC responders. This was only in response to a strong bipartisan push by New York delegation members after it became abundantly clear that the Administration was not planning to request any funds whatsoever. At the time, it was stated in the press and personally by then-Director Rob Portman, that this \$25 million figure was only a placeholder until the Administration could prepare a comprehensive plan and more accurately determine the higher, more appropriate level of funding needed. However, the plan and the reevaluated funding request never came from the Administration, and six years after 9/11, WTC responders, residents, area workers, and students are still in desperate need of care.

As the number of registered responders increases, the percent of responders needing treatment increases, and the intensity of their illness increases, it is probable that the costs for these services will increase. In addition, none of these funds have been made available to provide monitoring or treatment to the exposed community, including area residents, area workers and students.


So, as you begin to prepare the FY09 budget, we respectfully request an update on what level of funding you anticipate seeking for the care of WTC responders. Thank you for your attention to this matter. We anxiously await your response.

Sincerely,



CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senator



HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
United States Senator


CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress


JERROLD NADLER
Member of Congress


VITO FOSSELLA
Member of Congress


FRANK PALLONE JR.
Member of Congress


CHRISTOPHER SHAYS
Member of Congress


EDOLPHUS TOWNS
Member of Congress