

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2003

Ms. Marsha Johnson Evans
President and CEO
American Red Cross National Headquarters
431 18th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Ms. Evans,

We are writing to you about the volunteers who selflessly gave of their time at the World Trade Center site to help New Yorkers recover after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and who are now experiencing serious health problems.

Judy Wolff, a constituent of Representative Kind, traveled to New York City as a Red Cross volunteer to serve as a Family Services worker. Upon her return to Wisconsin, she experienced health problems including a persistent cough, bouts with pneumonia, and a weakened immune system. She recently went to New York City to participate in the medical exams that were being conducted by the Mt. Sinai Center for Occupational and Environmental Medicine for volunteers and workers who have become ill since being at Ground Zero. According to Mrs. Wolff, she was told that she may possibly be ill for at least an additional three years, and that her immune system will be weak during that time. Mrs. Wolff also tested positive for RADS (Reactive Airways Dysfunction Syndrome), and is now using inhalers everyday. Because of her chronic health problems, Mrs. Wolff has been unable to work, and her family is experiencing serious financial difficulties.

We believe that volunteers like Mrs. Wolff should receive assistance for their medical needs. We understand that the Red Cross, because of actions taken by Representative Kind, has indicated that it will pay for a portion of her medical bills. However, its offer of assistance will not do much to relieve the financial burden of the Wolff family. We believe that more should be done to help Mrs. Wolff and volunteers like her. The attacks of September 11, 2001, were unprecedented, and we could not have foreseen all that would be required to recover. However, we can and should ensure that those who volunteered to help others receive the help that they need, and we should establish the necessary procedures to be prepared in the future to make sure that other volunteers who give their time and energy will be taken care of if they become ill because of their service.

Therefore, we would like to know what the Red Cross can do to help individuals like Mrs. Wolff when they experience health problems because of their volunteer work. It is our understanding that the Red Cross will pay for the medical expenses, such as a broken leg, of volunteers who have been injured while helping after a natural disaster. However, we have been told that the Red Cross is not paying the medical bills for volunteers who helped at the World Trade Center site who are experiencing many of the health problems about which other first responders have complained.

We have specific questions that we hope you can answer on behalf of the Red Cross:

1. What is the policy of the Red Cross to assist volunteers who have been injured at a natural disaster? Does the Red Cross pay their medical bills or provide either workers compensation or disability, if that should be necessary, or provide other financial assistance?
2. Are Red Cross volunteers who have assisted at the World Trade Center site and who subsequently experienced respiratory or immune system problems being treated differently than those from previous disasters who sustained injuries?
3. What action is the Red Cross planning to take to assist volunteers?

The Wolff family should not have to decide between paying for necessary medical bills, and putting food on the table.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.



RON KIND
Member of Congress

Sincerely,



CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2003

The Honorable Tom Ridge
Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge,

We are writing to you about the volunteers who selflessly gave of their time at the World Trade Center site after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and who are now experiencing serious health problems.

Judy Wolff, a constituent of Representative Kind, traveled to New York City as a Red Cross volunteer to serve as a Family Services worker. Upon her return to Wisconsin, she experienced health problems including a persistent cough, bouts with pneumonia, and a weakened immune system. She recently went to New York City to participate in the medical exams that were being conducted by the Mt. Sinai Center for Occupational and Environmental Medicine for volunteers and workers who have become ill since being at Ground Zero. According to Mrs. Wolff, she was told that she may possibly be ill for at least an additional three years, and that her immune system will be weak during that time. Mrs. Wolff also tested positive for RADS (Reactive Airways Dysfunction Syndrome), and is now using inhalers everyday. Because of her chronic health problems, Mrs. Wolff has been unable to work, and her family is experiencing serious financial difficulties.

We believe that volunteers like Mrs. Wolff should receive assistance for their medical needs. We understand that the Red Cross, because of actions taken by Representative Kind, has indicated that it will pay for a portion of her medical bills. However, its offer of assistance will not do much to relieve the financial burden of the Wolff family. We believe that more should be done to help Mrs. Wolff and volunteers like her. The attacks of September 11, 2001, were unprecedented, and we could not have foreseen all that would be required to recover. However, we can and should ensure that those who volunteered to help others receive the help that they need, and we should establish the necessary procedures to be prepared in the future to ensure that other volunteers who give their time and energy will be taken care of if they become ill because of their service.

Therefore, we would like to know what the Department of Homeland Security can do or should be doing to help individuals like Mrs. Wolff when they experience health problems because of their volunteer work after a terrorist attack. Since the administration has stated that another attack in the United States is inevitable, and given the important role that volunteers play in helping to recover from an attack, we would like to know what the Department can do to assist Mrs. Wolff and other volunteers from the World Trade Center attack who we have been told are in similar situations.

While it is our understanding that the Red Cross will pay for the medical expenses, such

as a broken leg, of volunteers who have been injured while helping after a natural disaster, we have been told that the Red Cross currently is not paying the medical bills for volunteers who helped at the World Trade Center site who are experiencing many of the health problems about which other first responders have complained.

We have specific questions which we hope you can answer:

1. What is the policy of the Department of Homeland Security in assisting volunteers who have been injured at a natural disaster? Will the Department of Homeland Security, under its responsibilities set forth by the Stafford Act since assuming the duties of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, provide either workers compensation or disability if that should be necessary or provide other financial assistance?
2. Are volunteers who worked at the World Trade Center site and who subsequently experienced respiratory or immune system problems being treated differently than those from volunteers from previous disasters who sustained injuries?
3. What action is the Department of Homeland Security planning to take to assist volunteers?

In addition to writing to you, we also have written to the President of the Red Cross, a copy of which is enclosed, but given the importance of volunteers to any national security emergency, we believed that we would bring this issue to your attention as well.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



RON KIND
Member of Congress



CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress