

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2003

The Honorable George E. Pataki
Governor of the State of New York
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Pataki,

We are writing to express our concern over the funding for, and development of Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs in New York. As you know, CERT programs are intended to help train people to be better prepared to respond to emergency situations in their communities. Because New York was the unfortunate victim of the largest terrorist attack in American history and continues to be one of the most likely targets for future terrorist attacks, it is paramount that New York be adequately prepared for future emergencies.

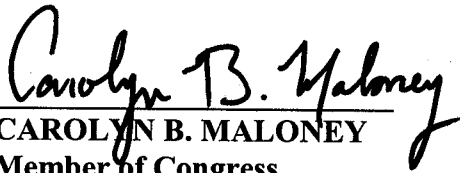
With our devastating recent history of shouldering a catastrophic disaster, New York should be a forerunner in the CERT program development race. Yet, New York lags far behind other states, even those that received less funding. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website, CERT programs have been established in more than 340 communities in 45 states. Florida leads the pack with 87 CERT programs currently in place and has received \$785,000 of federal CERT grants spending. Idaho has received less than \$193,000 in grants and has managed to organize 19 CERT programs. New York, taking the brunt of the September 11 terrorist attacks, has received over \$879,000 in CERT grants, but has currently only two CERT programs throughout the entire state, and zero in Manhattan. We are concerned at the slow rate of CERT program development in New York and respectfully ask what your administration has done to encourage their development, and what your plans are to better encourage their development and to provide funding support, since to date, little progress has been made?

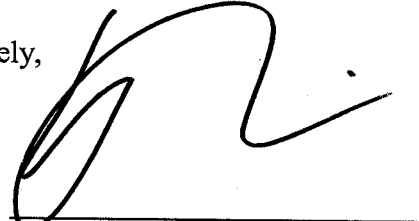
The two CERT programs currently up and running in New York, one in Brooklyn, and one in Suffolk County, have yet to receive any CERT grant money from the state. Despite the lack of funds however, the programs have managed to develop training strategies in workplace organizations, and have brought together critical community leaders. Manhattan Borough President, C. Virginia Fields, together with the City's four other borough presidents and the City of New York, have also made efforts to establish a framework for CERT programs, but have experienced difficulties in working with the State on procuring funding. Most recently, concerned residents of Battery Park City, in Manhattan, led by organizers with former military and first responder backgrounds, have taken the initiative to develop a CERT program. This group already has volunteer meetings scheduled, with more than 60 individuals signed up from all types of professions, including doctors, nurses, emergency response experts, and those with military experience. As local communities work to remain active and implement strategies, the state must work to disburse the funding it has to support these programs. Please explain why these important programs have not received funding, when money has already been allocated to the state for this purpose.

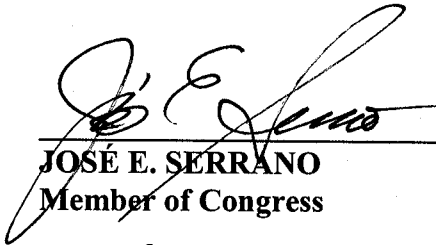
New York's \$879,000 in CERT grants must be more accessible for programs to continue their preparedness efforts, and for other programs to develop. As evidenced by the recent Al Quaeda plot to attack the Brooklyn Bridge, New York remains a prominent terrorist target, and citizens remain concerned about homeland security and local preparedness. New York must utilize the federal funding it has been given to more quickly establish important CERT programs and better prepare itself in the event of a future attack.

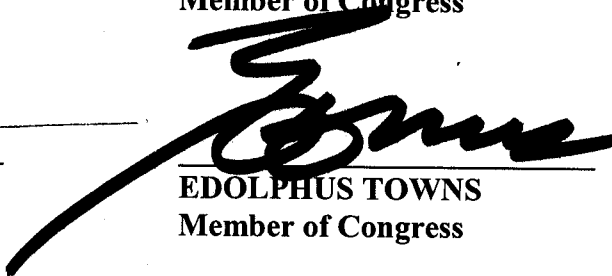
Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.


Sincerely,

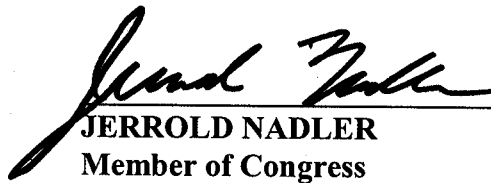

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress


ANTHONY D. WEINER
Member of Congress

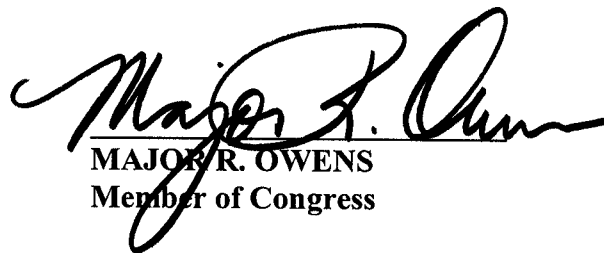

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