

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2008

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt,

It has been more than six years since the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11th. In that time much has been done to address the needs of those most severely injured, yet a great deal remains to be accomplished.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008 - H.R. 2764 - was signed by the President on December 27, 2007 allowing residents, office workers and other non-responders experiencing health effects from the September 11th terrorist attacks and its aftermath to be eligible for federal assistance for medical evaluation, screening and treatment. Eligible individuals include local residents, those employed in the general area, and even our city's school children who were exposed to the toxic mixture created by the horrible attacks. Unlike first responders who have received NIOSH supported medical care, non-responders have been effectively left in the cold for the past 6 years in regards to federal assistance.

The health effects of 9/11 have reached far and wide. Roughly 300,000 of the 400,000 individuals who were exposed to the heaviest dosages of toxins were not responders.


Our concern is that current funds appropriated through HHS for the medical care of residents have not been released. Of even greater worry to us is the indication that these funds may not be released 'whatsoever' during this entire fiscal year. The Bellevue WTC program is already providing some services to local residents but needs federal support to expand. In addition, funding this program would be the best way to expedite the availability of services to those in the community who need them the most. Unlike other health institutions throughout the city, the Bellevue center has received no federal funds.

It is of great importance we follow through with our commitment to those still suffering from the health consequences of 9/11. We have taken the first step by providing the funding for this crucial program. We are requesting that HHS immediately release the funding necessary for Bellevue WTC Environmental Health Center and provide us with an expected schedule of both the funding release and award dates so that we can meet our commitment to the innocent non-responders who continue to suffer unduly. In this issue we urge you to act expeditiously.

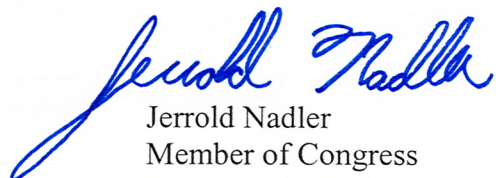
Sincerely,



Vito Fossella
Member of Congress



Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress