

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 10, 2002

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush,

Thank you for the November 14, 2002, letter from Secretary Tommy Thompson to responding to our letters to you of August 23, 2002, and September 30, 2002, regarding the \$90 million in Supplemental Appropriations for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to address the health of those workers who responded to the terrorist attacks at Ground Zero in New York City. While we appreciate the efforts that your administration has made in monitoring the health of the workers at the World Trade Center (WTC) site, we strongly believe that more must be done and must be done now.

The high rates of respiratory complaints and illness evidenced by WTC-site workers and volunteers participating in the World Trade Center Worker & Volunteer Medical Screening Program, a program cited in the Secretary's letter, clearly demonstrate the need for immediate screening examinations and urgent medical follow-up for those affected. Between 1/3 and one-half of the men and women examined to date have upper or lower respiratory illness, and half of those seen still suffer from stress-related emotional reactions or significant depression. While this program will aid approximately 9,000 workers and volunteers, added resources remain urgently needed for the estimated 26,000 exposed workers requiring these same screening services.

Too much time has already passed since more than 35,000 workers and volunteers were exposed in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> disaster, with thousands of workers estimated to still suffer health effects, with no or at best inappropriate treatment. Those who haven't yet been evaluated need to be screened as quickly as possible, and because an estimated 50% of these will be found to require further treatment, such care must be prescribed and monitored in a systematic way. The earlier these illnesses are diagnosed and treatment is begun, the more likely it is that treatment will be successful in preventing long-term illness and disability. To evaluate the outcome of initial treatment approaches, repeat examinations should be conducted one year after the first assessment. It would be preferable that those who responded to the WTC disaster undergo systematic annual examinations, as has been provided to nuclear processing workers in a similar federally funded program.

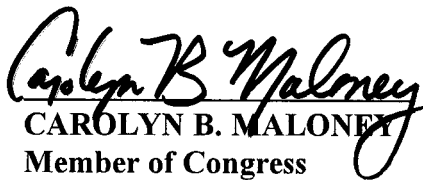
The one-year anniversary for the WTC workers screened in 2002 with the limited federal funding is rapidly approaching. To monitor the effectiveness of treatment and track the course of WTC-related illnesses, both short- and long-term, an additional medical surveillance program must be put in place now. The program infrastructure must be established, drawn from staff with experience conducting the current medical screening program and familiar with the population of WTC responders at risk and the data obtained from their initial evaluations. Methods must be set

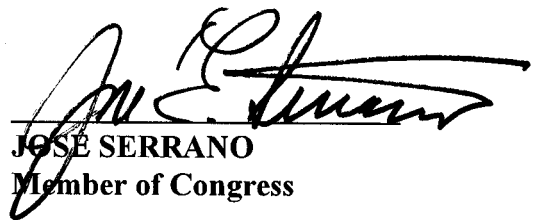
in place to track workers/volunteers at risk and schedule them for reexamination. This requires that resources be made available now so that continuity of the existing program not be lost.

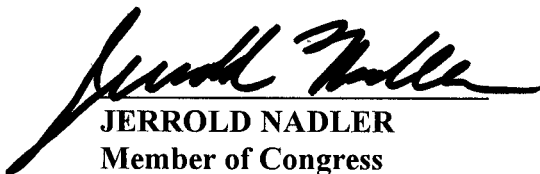
Therefore, we respectfully again request the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this issue, as we requested in our previous letters, because the urgency of the situation is not getting through to the bureaucracy. We specifically want to discuss funding through an expansion of the program already in place and being coordinated by the Mt. Sinai Center for Occupational & Environmental Medicine, one that would monitor the health of workers from Ground Zero. No other existing program cited in your letter offers needed health services to exposed workers and volunteers. The New York City World Trade Center Registry mentioned in Secretary Thompson's letter is exactly a registry and nothing more. The workers in need selflessly risked their own lives to help find victims in the days following the attacks, and they deserve our united help.

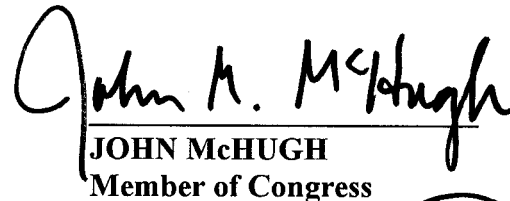
Thank you for your attention in this matter.

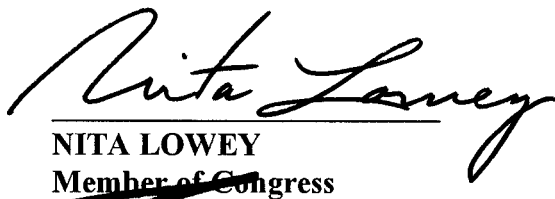
Sincerely,

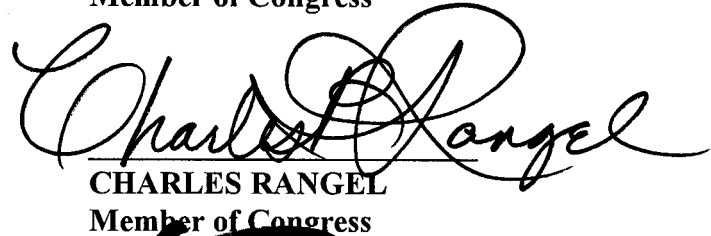
  
CAROLYN B. MALONEY  
Member of Congress

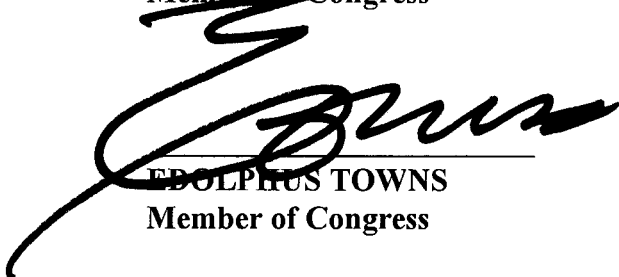
  
JOSE SERRANO  
Member of Congress

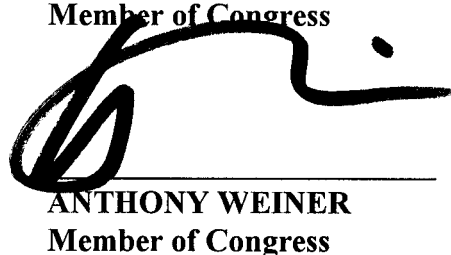
  
JERROLD NADLER  
Member of Congress

  
JOHN McHUGH  
Member of Congress

  
NITA LOWEY  
Member of Congress

  
CHARLES RANGEL  
Member of Congress

  
EDOLPHUS TOWNS  
Member of Congress

  
ANTHONY WEINER  
Member of Congress



MAJOR OWENS  
Member of Congress



NYDIA VELAZQUEZ  
Member of Congress



ELIOT ENGEL  
Member of Congress



MAURICE HINCHEY  
Member of Congress