

# Report to New Yorkers from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

DECEMBER 2003

Dear New Yorker,

As I write, the 108th Congress is halfway complete.

It's been a session marked by consideration and debate of as many big issues as any on record. We have been asked to consider the U.S. role internationally, as well as important domestic issues. At times, the Administration's unbending determination to push ideologically driven policies through Congress has been enormously frustrating. With both Congress and the White House controlled by Republicans, I believe it's been tough for advocates of an inclusive, progressive, responsible agenda.

Nevertheless, many measures passed—measures which I've fought for on behalf of New York and the nation:

- To cut through the national backlog of unprocessed rape kits, Congress passed the Debbie Smith Act;
- New federal funding for the 2nd Avenue Subway was put in place;
- Special funding for 9/11-related trauma treatment in city schools was obtained;
- The crumbling seawall along the East River in Queens will receive much-needed attention.

Sometimes, "progress" is defined as staving off damage as best one can. I strongly opposed an energy bill laden with special-interest deals (even though it passed the House, the Senate successfully stalled the proposal), and I voted against legislation that will weaken Medicare as we know it. Both bills were bullied through the House of Representatives within the last few months.

Inside this Report, you'll find a summary of other activity in the 108th Congress so far—as well as status reports on what I have been working on.

Your input is what helps me do that job—so don't hesitate to tell me where you stand on these or other issues we face together as New Yorkers, and as Americans.

Sincerely,

Carolyn B. Maloney

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P.S. If you are having any problems with a federal agency, my staff may be able to help. Please don't hesitate to call or write for assistance. If you'd like to visit with a staff member, it's always best to call first for an appointment. Please call the Manhattan or Queens offices listed at left.

And, as always, I want to hear any suggestions and recommendations you may have regarding legislation. Many of my best initiatives originate with ideas brought to me by constituents!

## Federal aid to NYC for 9/11 still incomplete

Two years after 9/11, the status of federal aid pledged to help New York's recovery remains uncertain. Overall costs and losses from the disaster are estimated above \$80 billion, but even the President's initial pledge of \$20 billion is far from being reached.

After months of effort, important additional funding was delivered, including \$90 million to monitor the health of rescue workers, \$100 million for school costs related to the disaster, \$33 million for mental health treatment of school children, and millions more in aid that resulted from FEMA reforms in housing and disaster victim assistance programs. Even with these victories, New York City and state lost an estimated \$8.8 billion in tax revenues, and close to \$2 billion in tax breaks for downtown development projects may never be realized—and unjustified taxation on some recovery aid is leading to more than \$250 million in 9/11 aid being sent back to Washington.

Funding formulas in the Homeland Security budget for New York are grossly inadequate. The state of Wyoming is granted \$38.61 per person—but New York only gets \$5.47! As Chair of the Democratic Task Force on Homeland Security, I have co-authored a bill to change the distribution formula (H.R. 2512) and a bill that requires every community to reach a certain level of terrorism preparedness (H.R. 3227).

A fairer federal response is still needed to help with the economic impacts of this enormous disaster. I'll continue to fight for New York's unmet needs.

## Health of "Ground Zero" workers at risk

Thousands of 9/11 workers are still sick from toxins at Ground Zero, more than two years after the disaster. But the federal response still falls short of what's needed. That was the major finding of a recent hearing I requested where firefighters, recovery workers, and other first responders testified that they are still sick. Sadly, no funding for their health care has been allocated, and Washington lacks both a sense of urgency and a plan to help.

What kind of message is sent to future first responders, if such limited help is sent now? 1/3 of the 7,000 rescue workers enrolled in Mt. Sinai's screening program are still experiencing health problems. Many of these emergency responders have no health insurance, and even the limited federal aid meant just to screen their health, not treat them, is mired in huge delays.

The whole issue is similar to the Gulf War Syndrome—Washington is just not yet dealing with reality. I'll be fighting for a full, focused and coordinated federal response to those who risked their lives to save others.



Rep. Maloney joins rape survivor Debbie Smith, Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy, and Kirk Bloodworth, who was exonerated because of DNA evidence, at a press conference announcing the introduction of the "Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology Act."

## Maloney's 'Debbie Smith Act' passes

Every two minutes, a woman in this country is sexually assaulted. But bringing their attackers to justice isn't like the true-crime TV shows like "C.S.I.". Only 6% of rape victims will ever see their attacker spend a day in jail, in part because hundreds of thousands of rape kits—containing DNA and forensic evidence gathered from women after they're attacked—are collecting dust in police departments and crime labs across the country, ignored because of a lack of funding. Each unprocessed kit represents a rapist who could be still on the streets!

I've been working on this issue since June 2001 when I invited Debbie Smith, a rape survivor from Williamsburg, VA, to testify at a hearing of the Government Reform Committee. Ms. Smith was raped in 1989—and waited six years for advances in DNA testing to identify her attacker.

I'm proud to say that the "Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology Act" overwhelmingly passed the House of Representatives on November 5th. The bill includes "The Debbie Smith Act," legislation I introduced earlier this year, that authorizes funding for processing the backlog of DNA samples and for training Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners and police in the collection and handling of forensic evidence.

## Ending unfair labor practices, Maloney bill passes

Tax-paying (and law-abiding) American workers and businesses scored a victory on November 6, when the House passed the "Federal Prison Industries Competition in Contracting Act," by a vote of 350-65. I'm a leading sponsor of this legislation that will ensure that Federal Prison Industries will have to compete for its government



I recently toured a small manufacturing business in Long Island City, where owner Max Mongru (far right) may soon have a chance to compete for federal contracts as a result of my bill opening up \$630 million in federal contracts to competitive bidding.

contracts while also providing federal prisoners with rehabilitative work opportunities.

A bit of background: FPI pays its workers between 23 cents and \$1.15 an hour, pays no local, state, or federal taxes, and does not adhere to OSHA regulations. Even worse, FPI has a monopoly on the federal market for goods such as gloves.

In 1997, the Glamour Glove Company, located in Long Island City, was nearly forced to close when FPI illegally increased its glove production, forcing Glamour Glove to lose 80% of its glove business. Fortunately, the company stayed in business after negotiations with FPI. I'm proud to have worked with Glamour Glove to ensure that these hard-working employees would not lose their jobs.

## Fighting for those who fought for freedom

I was as outraged as anyone at the administration's cuts in access to veterans' health care by increasing copayments and enrollment fees—which would, by their own estimates, push 1.3 million veterans out of the VA system.

But now, the VA has proposed effectively closing Manhattan's VA Hospital, transferring patients to other facilities. I'm beyond outraged—and am leading the effort to keep the hospital open, testifying at hearings, organizing veterans' rallies and pressuring VA officials.

Combined with the Administration's decision in January to cut off access to VA health care for 164,000 veterans without service-connected disabilities, some of whom earn as little as \$25,000 a year, the health care needs of our veterans clearly place a distant second behind the Administration's irresponsible tax cuts.

I've cosponsored H.R. 2569, "The Salute to Veterans and the Armed Forces Act of 2003," which

improves veterans' health care systems and expands reduces waiting times, and blocks increases in prescription drug co-payments and enrollment fees. The men and women who risked their lives for our country deserve our care and concern after they return from service.

## Medicare "reform" protects drug companies

During the House debate on the Medicare Prescription Drug bill, I heard from countless numbers of seniors who made their views on Medicare clear. They told me that Medicare should provide a comprehensive, guaranteed, and affordable drug benefit.

Unfortunately, the bill that recently passed Congress provides inadequate benefits that would leave half our seniors paying more out of pocket for prescription drug coverage than they do now.

What's more, the new law contains a gap in coverage that will leave half of seniors without any drug coverage for part of every year, and it even prohibits the Secretary of Health and Human Services from negotiating with pharmaceutical companies to lower prescription drug prices charged to Medicare!

I came to Congress to protect seniors. This bill just doesn't do the job. It undermines Medicare, and that's why I voted against it.

## Maloney identity theft prevention rules pass

As the senior New York Democrat on the Financial Services Committee, I helped draft an important new set of identity theft protections that became law this month.

The protections include: a free annual credit report so consumers can make sure their credit cards have not been taken out for a spin by other people in their name; a system that will notify banks of emerging patterns of I.D. theft; protections for consumer medical information; a fraud alert system allowing I.D. theft victims to protect their credit information; and the right for consumers to obtain their credit scores.

## A new future for Afghan women

Afghan women faced violence and tremendous hardships under the Taliban regime. They were denied access to education and healthcare, and stripped of basic human rights. In the two years since the fall of the Taliban government, women have been returning to their rightful place in society. However, there is still much to be done.

The supplemental appropriations bill signed into law November 6, contains a critical amendment that >>

*continued from page 3*

I authored to direct \$60 million for Afghan women's programs and \$5 million for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. This funding will make desperately needed programs available to Afghan women, and will go a long way in ensuring that women are not relegated to second-class citizenship.

## The new Eleanor Roosevelt High School

When I organized the Task Force for an East Side High School, co-chaired with Borough President C. Virginia Fields, I couldn't have imagined how well it would turn out.

Working with the Board of Education, local elected officials, and parents, the Task Force helped create the Eleanor Roosevelt High School which opened its permanent quarters on East 76th Street in September. Offering a strong academic program in a small school setting, ERHS has brand new equipment, excellent teachers and a dedicated administration. I congratulate the parents who were most responsible for navigating the long, hard path toward opening this new facility.

## City transit advances with federal funds

As a leading champion of the Second Avenue Subway, I'm pleased to report Congress is on the verge of appropriating funds for the Subway for the fourth consecutive year. With one million expected passengers per day, the new line will carry

more people than many other entire systems.

Federal funds are a vital part of the mass transit

## Federal funding for Queens seawall announced



PHOTO: AZI PAYBARAH, QUEENS TRIBUNE

**Congresswoman Maloney announces federal funds to advance the repair of the Queens seawall along the East River, with tenant leaders of Queensbridge Houses, elected, civic and environmental leaders.**

picture. The Queens/Manhattan 63rd Street Tunnel Connector was completed in 2001 with the help of \$305 million in federal funds, enabling 20% more subway trains to run between Manhattan and Queens. Construction on the East Side Access project—slated for \$75 million in federal funds this fiscal year—will begin in 2004 and eventually will allow the Long Island Rail Road to arrive at Grand Central Terminal, allowing an estimated five thousand Queens residents to take advantage of this shorter commute through a new stop in Sunnyside, in addition to cutting travel times for LIRR commuters from Long Island.