

_____, 2019

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Leahy,

I am writing to urge you to support S. 546, the “Never Forget the Heroes Act,” which would extend the authorization for the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) until 2090.

Our nation has a moral obligation to support and care for the police officers, firefighters, and civilian volunteers who gave their all on that fateful day and the many days that followed. It is disgraceful that they — or, in too many cases, their surviving family members — could see the benefits they deserve and depend on cut by as much as 70% if VCF funding is not renewed. This is not how we honor our obligation to these heroic men and women.

This is not a “local issue.” There are over 90,000 responders and survivors living in all 50 states, including many of your very own constituents — 40 to be exact — who have registered for benefits from the VCF. They do not deserve to see their benefits slashed after giving everything to help rebuild not only New York City, but our country.

As the administrator of the Victim Compensation Fund has pointed out, some cancers and diseases that could arise from exposure to the toxins in the air at the World Trade Center and other recovery and clean-up sites may not be seen for several years. Since 2015, there has been a 235% increase in claims from family members that have seen loved ones pass away from these diseases. That is why it is even more troubling that those who face health issues after February 1, 2019 will only be paid at 30% of their claim because of the shortfall in funds that Congress appropriated to the VCF when they last reauthorized the program in 2015.

There is no reason that the Victim Compensation Fund should not be reauthorized until 2090 to match the same authorization length of the World Trade Center Health Program. It is imperative that we honor the sacrifices and the memories of those who gave their life that day or who were made ill by their service in the years that followed.

Once again, I urge you to support S. 546 and help take care of our first responders.

Concerned Citizen,
