

CHAIRMAN FRANK PALLONE, JR.
HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE MARK-UP
“The James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2009”
OPENING STATEMENT

March 16, 2010

Good morning. Today, the Subcommittee is meeting to consider H.R. 847, “the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2010,” introduced by Representatives Carolyn Maloney and Jerry Nadler. I would like to take a moment to recognize them for their hard work, commitment and perseverance on this very important piece of legislation.

Further, I would like to recognize and thank all of the first responders who are here today. You are true heroes. I would also like to thank some of the survivors who are with us as well. I know the 9/11 terrorist attacks have changed your lives in ways that many of us could never understand.

Since 2008, the Subcommittee has held a number of hearings on the health effects of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Specifically, last April, a legislative hearing was held on the bill before us today. These hearings have provided us with vital information on this issue and the need for the bill’s passage.

More than eight years ago, our country was struck by a horrible tragedy. Almost 3,000 people were killed in the collapse of the World Trade Center towers in New York City, including hundreds of fire fighters, police officers and employees of companies housed within the towers. Beyond the immediate loss of life, thousands of others are now suffering debilitating illnesses from its aftermath.

That day, and the days and weeks that followed, individuals from all over the country rushed to the aide of those in need, not stopping to think about the effects on their health or lives. I was at the site shortly after the attacks and I saw first hand the dedication and determination of rescue workers and volunteers who pushed themselves to the brink of exhaustion. These were selfless acts of courage at our nation’s time of need.

We now know, with great documentation, that the dust, glass fragments and other toxins released into the air affected thousands of responders and survivors. These substances included hundreds of tons of asbestos and nearly half a million pounds of lead. This exposure has led to new or worsened respiratory diseases, gastro-esophageal disorders and other health conditions.

H.R. 847 would establish the World Trade Center Health Program, a permanent program to screen, monitor and treat eligible responders and survivors who are suffering from World Trade Center related diseases. It would direct the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct and support research into new conditions that may be related to the attacks and to evaluate different and emerging methods of diagnosis and treatment.

Also, the legislation would build upon the expertise of the Centers of Excellence, which are currently providing high-quality care to thousands of responders and survivors ensuring ongoing data collection and analysis to evaluate health risks.

Over the past 6 months, I have worked tirelessly on moving this bill through my Subcommittee. My staff, alongside the authors of the bill, members of the NY delegation, victims and their families, as well as the advocates that represent them, have continued around the clock to strengthen the bill and ensure its passage.

I would like to thank everyone for their cooperation throughout this long and arduous process.