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Congress Acts to Ensure Health Care and Compensation for First Responders and Victims of September 11th Attacks

Congresswoman Matsui Votes to Assist 9/11 Heroes

WASHINGTON, DC– Today, Congresswoman Doris Matsui (CA-05) joined her colleagues in the House of Representatives to pass a final version of the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, H.R. 847. This legislation ensures both health care and compensation for first responders and victims of the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001. After passing both the House and Senate today, the legislation will now be sent to the President for his signature. An earlier version had passed the House in September with Congresswoman Matsui's support.

"I am pleased that this Congress acted to ensure health care and long overdue compensation for the many heroes of September 11th and their families," Congresswoman Matsui stated. "On that day, we were reminded what unites us as Americans, and it is in that spirit of service and community that we must continue to take care of those who selflessly took care of their neighbors, colleagues, and perfect strangers alike."

In the wake of September 11th, several programs were set up to assist first responders and citizens affected by the tragedy, including a registry of responders to the disaster, a registry of community members who lived at or around ground zero, and programs to monitor and treat the health effects of their exposure to the numerous chemicals and hazards encountered during the disaster. Additionally, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Congress created the Victims Compensation Fund (VCF), a federal program to compensate the families of 9/11 victims and those who suffered personal injury and to limit related litigation. While Congress has provided some funding to continue these health programs since 2003, these programs have never been authorized and have relied on tenuous year-to-year appropriations.

The 9/11 Health and Compensation Act builds on the current World Trade Center health program to establish authorizing language and a capped-mandatory spending so that, even as time passes, victims of 9/11 will still be adequately cared for. It will authorize and fund health programs to provide monitoring and treatment to first responders and community residents who were affected by exposure of toxic plume in the wake of 9/11. In addition, H.R. 847 will reopen the Victims Compensation Fund until 2031, in order to give the greatest opportunity possibility for victims to file claims and protect those whose injuries may be latent and may manifest during

the next two decades.

Unlike other mandatory spending programs, funding is capped for both total dollars available and total number of people who may participate. The legislation provides a total of \$4.3 billion in funding for the health and compensation titles of the bill, and caps federal funding for the health program over five years at \$1.5 billion. Moreover, New York City will contribute 10 percent of those costs.

The bill is not only fully paid for, but will reduce the deficit by \$450 million over 10 years, as estimated by the independent and nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO). The costs will be paid for by implementing a two percent fee on government procurement from foreign companies located in non-GPA countries and a one-year extension of H-B1 and L-1 Visa fees for outsourcing companies. These are estimated by CBO to collect \$4.59 billion over the 10-year scoring period for the bill.

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