

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would also like to thank my colleagues from the New York delegation for their steadfast commitment to this legislation, as well as the thousands of first responders and 9-11 survivors who have fought for this bill.

We will never forget the experiences of September 11th – from the live images of the second plane hitting the World Trade Center, to the towers going down, to the tremendous loss of human life. We won't forget the heroism of that day either – from the emergency personnel who ran into the buildings to pull people out to the coworkers who carried their wounded friends down flights of stairs to safety. September 11th is one of our nation's greatest tragedies – but the tenacity, bravery, and compassion of our people also made it one of our finest hours.

Emergency crews from across the country, including my state of Illinois, supported the relief efforts at Ground Zero. They risked their lives to save the lives of others, and they did it without wearing the necessary respiratory equipment because the EPA told them the air was safe to breath. For days, weeks, and even months, first responders, clean-up crews, and survivors who went back at work shortly after the attacks, all breathed in the toxins from jet fuel, pulverized glass and cement, dust, and other toxic chemicals.

It's no big surprise that that these responders and survivors have serious physical and mental health maladies as a result of that day. What will be a surprise – and what will add insult to injury - is if this country does not provide for the needs of the victims. Many of the people directly impacted by the dust and debris from that day have become too sick to work. PTSD, depression, and anxiety have also limited survivors' ability to maintain employment. As is all too often the case, no job means no health insurance. Without these programs for responders and survivors, victims of the worst terrorist attack ever conducted on US soil could go without care.

The James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act provides treatment for the victims of this terrible attack. It establishes a monitoring program to track the consequences of exposure for victims. And it creates a system of data collection that will help us better understand how exposure to various gases, asbestos and other toxic substances affect our respiratory systems so that we can develop more effective treatment moving forward.

I am a strong supporter of this legislation, and want to thank the Chairman for his leadership on this issue.