



June 29, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

Re: S. 1334, The James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2009

Dear Chairman Harkin and Senator Enzi:

On behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo) I commend you for scheduling a hearing on the continuing needs of workers and communities affected by the events of September 11, 2001 and their lingering aftermath. I also write to commend S. 1334, the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2009 to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and urge you to mark it up and report it out as expeditiously as possible.

The legislation will establish the World Trade Center Health Program (WTC program) to provide medical monitoring and treatment benefits to eligible emergency responders and recovery and cleanup workers who responded to the World Trade Center terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and establish standards and procedures to ensure the quality health care that they deserve going forward.

As you know, in the days, weeks and months after the attacks, thousands of public employees from jurisdictions across the country – including many county employees – reported to Ground Zero to do what they felt was their duty. It should be no surprise to learn that the World Trade Center Registry, which tracks the health of the 410,000 people most heavily exposed after 9/11 includes 71,000 enrollees from all over the United States, including at least one from each Congressional District. Of those 71,000 enrollees, more than 20% come from outside the New York City metropolitan area.

As you will hear in testimony, their cases can be complex, difficult to diagnose and to treat. Accordingly, NACo urges you to ensure that the requisite expertise and resources be made available to these county employees, and others, through the WTC program to ensure that they receive the best care possible and that the added medical expense not unduly burden the health plans funded by the counties.

If you have any questions, please contact Associate Legislative Director for Health Policy, Paul Beddoe at (202) 942-4234 or pbeddoe@naco.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry E. Naake".

Larry E. Naake
Executive Director