

A Message from the General President on the Zadroga Act

Today Congress finally did the right thing and approved the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, H.R. 847, nine years following the terrorist attacks.

Passage of the Zadroga Act by Congress represents a major legislative victory in the 111th Congress for the IAFF, the Uniformed Firefighters Association of Greater New York, Local 94 and the Uniformed Fire Officers Association, Local 854.

We are pleased that Congress passed this life-saving measure before they adjourned.

Passage was long overdue, but the long-awaited approval from Congress will ensure that there is funding for existing medical monitoring and treatment programs for people at the World Trade Center or involved with the cleanup at Ground Zero who have suffered illnesses from the toxic dust and debris following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

Passage is especially gratifying because the Senate effectively rejected the Zadroga bill on December 9 when a procedural vote failed 57-42, three votes short of the 60 needed to overcome a filibuster waged by anti-labor Senators. Every Republican Senator voted against cloture while every Democratic Senator supported the measure.

The decision by the GOP to vote as a block against all legislation until they reached a deal to extend tax cuts and a budget spending bill to keep the federal government open was responsible for the earlier rejection of the Zadroga Act.

But once those bills were passed, a narrow window opened and allowed us to push for passage of the Zadroga Act. The bill's chief sponsors – Senator Charles Schumer (NY) and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (NY) – then joined supporters of the measure to push relentlessly to convince their colleagues to support the bill. The concerted efforts of those supporting the Zadroga Act won the day, and the measure passed in the Senate by a voice vote. The House of Representatives then immediately approved the measure.

The IAFF worked with leadership from both the Uniformed Firefighters Association of Greater New York, Local 94, and the Uniformed Fire Officers Association, Local 854, to get the Zadroga Act passed. The effort of our New York locals was nothing less than astonishing. They did everything they could to keep the Senate focused on this important legislation.

In a session of Congress otherwise filled with significant challenges and marred by bitter partisanship, passage of the Zadroga Act was unquestionably a positive development.