

Reopen 9/11 Health Fund, Pols Plead

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By: Michael Mcauliff

The push to win long-term help for the heroes of 9/11 inched forward in Congress on Wednesday with an impassioned display meant to prod forgetful lawmakers to act.

Several New York legislators are trying to reopen the Sept. 11 Victim Compensation Fund to aid thousands of responders and others who have gotten sick since the fund closed in 2005.

But their colleagues have balked at the potential cost, leaving the measure to languish without a vote.

In testimony meant to finally move the bill, New Yorkers admitted the cost is high, but said it pales next to the sacrifices made by people who answered the call on Sept. 11, 2001 - many of whom packed a House hearing room.

"The solutions ... are neither easy nor inexpensive, but they are part of our country's moral obligation," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-Manhattan, Queens). "We must take care of the people who took care of us."

"There is really no reason to delay this any further," said Long Island Rep. Pete King, a Republican, who noted there are people ill from their 9/11 service in 431 of the 435 congressional districts.

"We are so close to the finishing line," he said. "I really think it would be outrageous and disgraceful not to get the job done."

Sens. Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand are working on the measure in the Senate, where its future appears even less certain.