

# US lawmakers move to help stricken 9/11 workers

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The US Congress voted Wednesday to create a 10-year, four-billion-dollar program to help September 11 emergency workers sickened in the ruins of the worst terrorist attack on US soil.

The Senate and then the House of Representatives passed the measure after a last-minute compromise ended a Republican blockade of the bill in one of the final acts of the Democrat-led [US Congress](#).

The measure offers health care and compensation to firefighters, police officers and other [first responders](#) who rushed to the scene of the World Trade Center attack in 2001.

Some emergency workers who survived the collapse of the Twin Towers have become sick and even died from ailments like cancer in the nine years since, purportedly from toxic substances contained in the wreckage.

The Senate passed the measure by voice vote, while the House approved it by a 206-60 margin.

Democratic New York Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand championed the package and worked out a compromise, ending opposition from Republican Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma that delayed and risked derailing the deal.

The breakthrough came after pressure from television personalities, a

White House appeal, and heart-rending tales from first-responder campaigners about suffering and deaths from cancer blamed on toxic Ground Zero debris.

"Make no mistake: we're sick and dying, but we are not going away. Merry Christmas," said John Feal, an advocate for September 11 first responders.

"No one has ever questioned whether to provide the care they need. The only question was how to do so," said Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

"Some have tried to portray this debate as a debate between those who support 9/11 workers and those who don't," he said. "There was never any doubt about supporting the first responders. It was about doing it right."

Almost 3,000 people died on September 11, 2001 when planes hijacked by Al-Qaeda suicide operatives were flown into the World Trade Center, as well as the Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field.

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