

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 6, 2007

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write in response to the recent resignation of Dr. John Agwunobi as Assistant Secretary for Health. As part of his duties, Dr. Agwunobi served as the chair of the World Trade Center (WTC) Task Force. We would urge you to use the occasion of his departure to evaluate the work of the WTC Task Force and take action to address the pressing health care needs of those experiencing 9/11-related illnesses.

As stated in an April 27, 2007 letter to you – to which we have yet to receive a response – it is our understanding that on April 3, 2007, the WTC Task Force chaired by Dr. Agwunobi presented its recommendations to you regarding the federal government's plan to treat and monitor individuals whose health was compromised by the toxins of Ground Zero. With the sixth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks fast approaching, we are deeply concerned that Dr. Agwunobi resigned before your department finalized this plan and released it to Congress and the American people. We are likewise concerned that you have yet to announce Dr. Agwunobi's replacement to lead the WTC Task Force.

The number of ailing 9/11 rescue and recovery workers is increasing, workers' illnesses are becoming more severe, the projected cost of treating these illnesses is surging, and current federal treatment funding levels are likely inadequate. Given the urgency of this situation, we ask that you meet with us as soon as possible to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is your timeline for naming a new chair of the WTC Task Force?
- 2) What is the timeline for your department to develop a plan to address the monitoring and treatment needs of those exposed to the toxins at Ground Zero? When will such plan be made available to Congress and the public?

Once again, we ask that you schedule a meeting with us as soon as possible to answer these questions and to help ensure that federally-funded 9/11 health treatment and

monitoring programs have the resources they need to provide appropriate, long-term support to those affected by World Trade Center exposures.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schumer *Hillary Rodham Clinton*

CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senator

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
United States Senator

Carolyn B. Maloney

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress

Ferrol Nadler

FERROL NADLER
Member of Congress

Vito Fossella

VITO FOSSELLA
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone Jr.

FRANK PALLONE JR.
Member of Congress

Christopher Shays

CHRISTOPHER SHAYS
Member of Congress

Edolphus Towns

EDOLPHUS TOWNS
Member of Congress