

# Congress of the United States

March 10, 2011

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

On that black day in 2001 when the Twin Towers fell in New York, one other tiny building fell with them, the modest, historic, and much-loved Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Nicholas, right across the street.

The site of that tragedy - now known to all as Ground Zero - has become a central and universally revered place of American history. Many of us can see, in our mind's eye, the now-famous photo, taken the very next day, of Greek Orthodox Archbishop Demetrios, giving his blessing to a uniformed and helmeted member of the New York National Guard, who is kneeling before him on the rubble of Ground Zero. In the American annals of the Orthodox Church, this is one of two photos that have taken on iconic status; the other is a *Life* magazine cover from the early 1960's, where former Greek Orthodox Archbishop Iakovos is standing next to the Reverends Martin Luther King and Ralph David Abernathy, just before they began their march - arm-in-arm - on Selma, Alabama, in search of equal rights for all Americans. The Greek Orthodox community in the United States is justly proud to have two such photos represent their church in this country.

Since 9/11, much good work has been done on the site of Ground Zero, to erase the negative memories and build anew a positive and united future. Several other buildings have been taken down. Final plans have been made and construction has begun for monumental buildings and memorials to replace them, amidst a scene of remembrance and respect.

Sadly, just about the only matter that has been altogether stalled is the rebuilding of Saint Nicholas Church, a building that had stood there and had given spiritual sustenance, to New Yorkers and visitors alike, for decades before the World Trade Center had even been envisioned. Indeed, while immigrants were still being processed into the United States through Ellis Island - actually within sight of this little church - immigrants who had come before them were already worshipping there.

It has become public knowledge that negotiations between the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America - of which millions of Americans are active communicants - have completely broken down. To face the real possibility now that the New York courts must resolve the matter, can only cause great regret to all concerned that it has come to this.

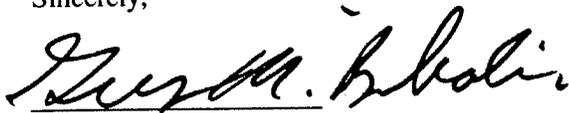
We are not privy to the respective arguments of the two sides, nor should we as members of Congress seek to be. However, as members of Congress and of the Congressional Hellenic Caucus, we are much grieved that there has not been more progress on what should indisputably be a healing moment for Ground Zero and for our country - the rising from the ashes of the little church that was destroyed by the violence and malice of 9/11. Saint Nicholas was always open as a place of worship and reflection to everyone in lower Manhattan, irrespective of creed, and that would be equally true now.

Moreover, as a symbol of tenacity and rebirth and universal faith, it would take on new meaning to all people, Americans and visitors alike. For that reason alone it must speedily be rebuilt. Such a symbol is sorely missed.

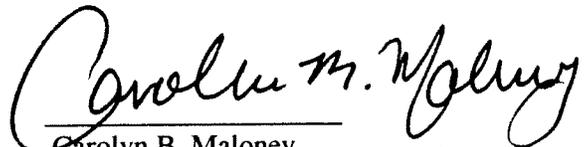
The singular goal of the Archdiocese is to build a new church that meets the needs of the site, the people, and the proper level of remembrance. The levels of money that have been discussed, which some may have seen as high, are simply necessary to build within the extremely complicated, onerous, and expensive security requirements that construction there now entails. We believe that, were good will brought back to the negotiating table, the two parties could learn from their experience of the past years, and swiftly reach a meeting of the minds that this project so desperately needs.

As members of Congress representing people to whom this is a seminal issue, we would be willing to do anything possible to assist in this effort. As governor of the great state of New York, we urge you to do what you can to spur this most worthwhile project forward. We, a host of other Americans, and the values we all seek to be reflected by the all the rebuilding efforts at Ground Zero, will be greatly in your debt.

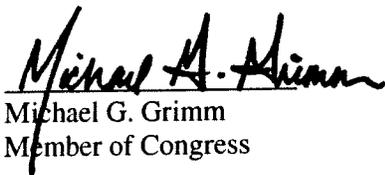
Sincerely,



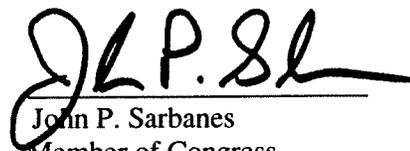
Gus M. Bilirakis  
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress



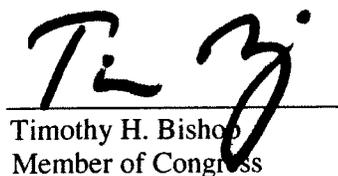
Michael G. Grimm  
Member of Congress



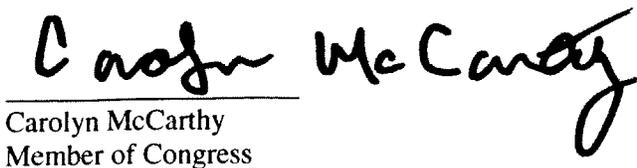
John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress



Rodney P. Freylinghuysen  
Member of Congress



Timothy H. Bishop  
Member of Congress



Carolyn McCarthy  
Member of Congress

## Congress of the United States

March 10, 2011

Governor Chris Christie  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Christie:

On that black day in 2001 when the Twin Towers fell in New York, one other tiny building fell with them, the modest, historic, and much-loved Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Nicholas, right across the street.

The site of that tragedy - now known to all as Ground Zero - has become a central and universally revered place of American history. Many of us can see, in our mind's eye, the now-famous photo, taken the very next day, of Greek Orthodox Archbishop Demetrios, giving his blessing to a uniformed and helmeted member of the New York National Guard, who is kneeling before him on the rubble of Ground Zero. In the American annals of the Orthodox Church, this is one of two photos that have taken on iconic status; the other is a **Life** magazine cover from the early 1960's, where former Greek Orthodox Archbishop Iakovos is standing next to the Reverends Martin Luther King and Ralph David Abernathy, just before they began their march - arm-in-arm - on Selma, Alabama, in search of equal rights for all Americans. The Greek Orthodox community in the United States is justly proud to have two such photos represent their church in this country.

Since 9/11, much good work has been done on the site of Ground Zero, to erase the negative memories and build anew a positive and united future. Several other buildings have been taken down. Final plans have been made and construction has begun for monumental buildings and memorials to replace them, amidst a scene of remembrance and respect.

Sadly, just about the only matter that has been altogether stalled is the rebuilding of Saint Nicholas Church, a building that had stood there and had given spiritual sustenance, to New Yorkers and visitors alike, for decades before the World Trade Center had even been envisioned. Indeed, while immigrants were still being processed into the United States through Ellis Island - actually within sight of this little church - immigrants who had come before them were already worshipping there.

It has become public knowledge that negotiations between the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America - of which millions of Americans are active communicants - have completely broken down. To face the real possibility now that the New York courts must resolve the matter, can only cause great regret to all concerned that it has come to this.

We are not privy to the respective arguments of the two sides, nor should we as members of Congress seek to be. However, as members of Congress and of the Congressional Hellenic Caucus, we are much grieved that there has not been more progress on what should indisputably be a healing moment for Ground Zero and for our country - the rising from the ashes of the little church that was destroyed by the violence and malice of 9/11. Saint Nicholas was always open as a place of worship and reflection to everyone in lower Manhattan, irrespective of creed, and that would be equally true now.

Moreover, as a symbol of tenacity and rebirth and universal faith, it would take on new meaning to all people, Americans and visitors alike. For that reason alone it must speedily be rebuilt. Such a symbol is sorely missed.

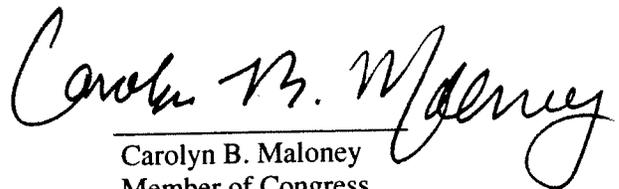
The singular goal of the Archdiocese is to build a new church that meets the needs of the site, the people, and the proper level of remembrance. The levels of money that have been discussed, which some may have seen as high, are simply necessary to build within the extremely complicated, onerous, and expensive security requirements that construction there now entails. We believe that, were good will brought back to the negotiating table, the two parties could learn from their experience of the past years, and swiftly reach a meeting of the minds that this project so desperately needs.

As members of Congress representing people to whom this is a seminal issue, we would be willing to do anything possible to assist in this effort. As governor of the great state of New Jersey, we urge you to do what you can to spur this most worthwhile project forward. We, a host of other Americans, and the values we all seek to be reflected by the all the rebuilding efforts at Ground Zero, will be greatly in your debt.

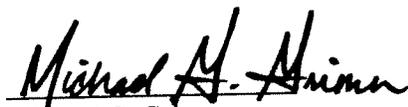
Sincerely,



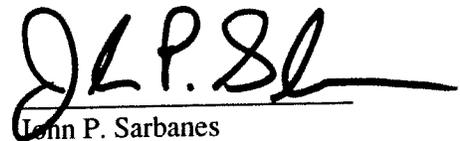
Gus M. Bilirakis  
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress



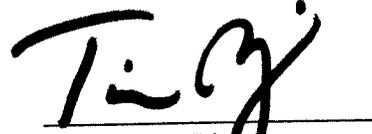
Michael G. Grimm  
Member of Congress



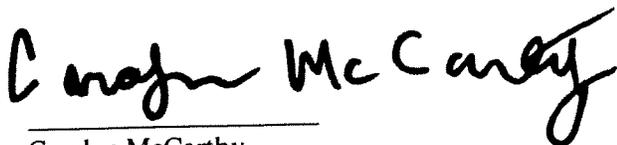
John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress



Rodney P. Freylinghuysen  
Member of Congress



Timothy H. Bishop  
Member of Congress



Carolyn McCarthy  
Member of Congress