

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 27, 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush
President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Working families in and around New York City continue to be hard hit by the lasting impacts of 9/11, yet the federal emergency programs aimed at helping them are closing before the assistance is delivered to tens of thousands of people in need. We feel strongly that FEMA needs to extend the impending January 31, 2003, deadline and to expand the geographic boundary covered by the Mortgage and Rental Assistance (MRA) program to ensure that those currently eligible and those who would be eligible by expanding the current boundaries have the opportunity to apply. If this expansion and extension are not secured, countless families and individuals that continue to be affected by 9/11 will lose their homes, lives will be put in jeopardy, and the responsibilities of the federal government to respond adequately after national disasters will not have been fully met in New York.

To date, only \$95 million of the allocated \$175 million in FEMA MRA funds have been used. To allow these funds to sit dormant as families are evicted from their homes seems antithetical to the traditional role FEMA has played in disaster recovery efforts. Additionally, FEMA did not publicize the MRA program in the mainstream print media until early November 2002, fourteen months after the attacks, and just over two months before the program was scheduled to end. Only within the past few weeks has the program been publicized on the subway. The resultant lack of public awareness has kept the MRA program from providing assistance to victims and their families facing eviction and mortgage foreclosure.

In addition to the MRA program's poor performance reaching those FEMA deemed eligible to apply, under its current guidelines, the program's eligibility rules arbitrarily exclude a huge number of impacted individuals and families who should have been deemed eligible for assistance from the start. These are people who lost jobs or wages due to the 9/11 attacks but worked in the outer boroughs, Long Island, Westchester, and New Jersey. They were barred from accessing MRA assistance due to the geographic boundaries added to the program by FEMA.

Historically, FEMA opens all of its Individual Assistance programs to all designated disaster counties. The five boroughs of New York City were designated disaster counties immediately after the attacks, and the two Long Island counties and eight counties north of the City were approved for all Individual Assistance programs by FEMA on September 28, 2001. Yet, in its response to this disaster, FEMA subsequently took the unprecedented step of limiting eligibility for Individual Assistance programs to those victims within the fifteen designated disaster counties who were residents and workers from Manhattan, and a small group of

economic victims outside of Manhattan.

With less than ten days before this critical program expires, we urge you to extend the application deadline for the MRA program so that everyone who could benefit from this aid has the opportunity to apply. We also believe the program should be expanded to include a larger pool of people affected by the attacks. With your leadership, we can ensure that New York's 9/11 jobless are provided with the assistance they need to keep a roofs over their families' heads.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

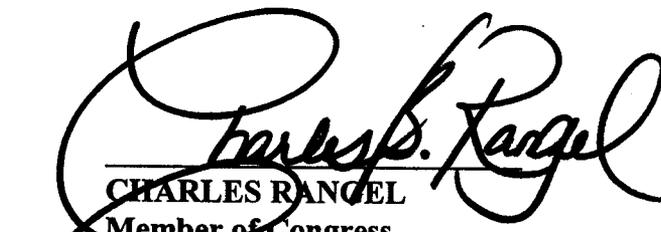

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Member of Congress

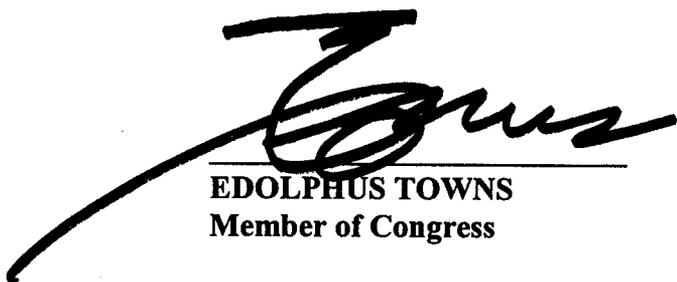

JERROLD NADLER
Member of Congress

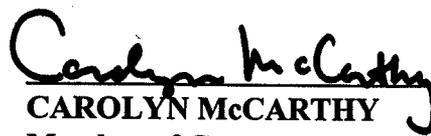

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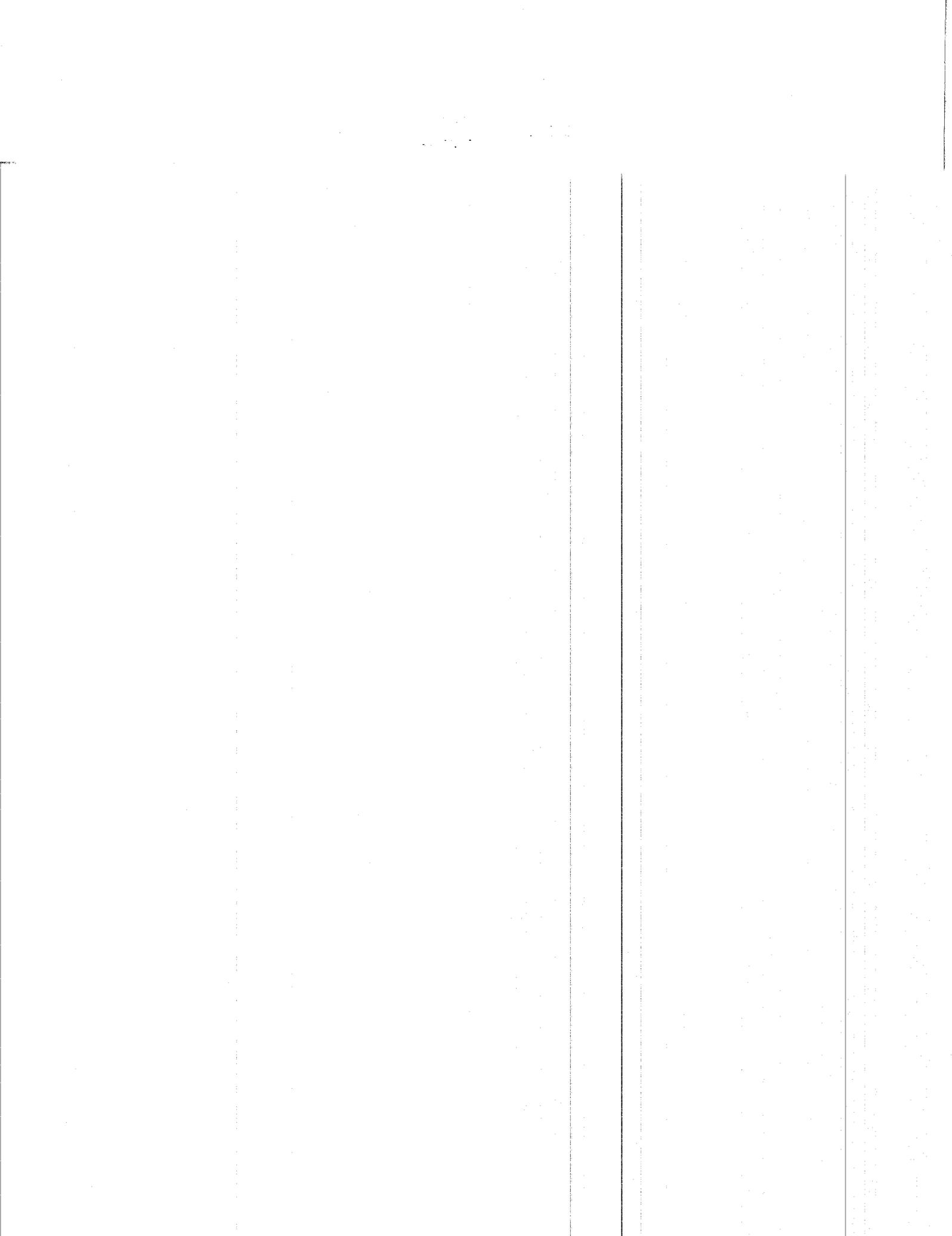

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