



October 3, 2011

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Gillibrand:

Last May, the Attorney General committed that while the funds that Congress appropriated for administering the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) would not become available until October, the VCF would do everything it could before that date to be up and running.


I am pleased to inform you today that the VCF is up and running as promised. Starting today, the VCF will offer a new website designed to provide as much information as possible to potential claimants. Claimants will be able to register for the VCF online, the first step in the claims process; obtain a checklist of the kinds of documents and information that they will need when they submit their claims, so that they can begin gathering it; and view updated Frequently Asked Questions, designed to make the process as simple as possible.

Over the summer, while working with a very limited budget, we have laid the foundation for a claims processing system that we believe will be fair, transparent, and easy to navigate. With full funding now available, I am confident that we will be able to complete the necessary infrastructure for a streamlined, automated claims process in a timely manner.

Our system will enable claimants to submit their claim information online, through a system that tailors its questions to the nature of their injury and claim. While still allowing for personalized attention, the system will be sufficiently automated that precious time and administrative funds are not wasted on cumbersome bureaucratic processes. And rather than asking claimants to submit documents that they have already submitted several times to others, the VCF will facilitate the electronic transfer, with the claimant's permission, of as much information from those other sources as possible.

As we pass this milestone, I would like to thank you once again for your support for the VCF. To make sure that your offices have the information they need, my staff will arrange briefings and points of contact for you soon. Working together, I know we can provide first responders and other affected community members the kind of program we can all be proud of.

Very truly yours,



Sheila L. Birnbaum