



Duckworth, Maloney & Blumenthal Re-introduce Bill to Create Compensation Fund for Essential Workers

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY-12) today re-introduced the *Pandemic Heroes Compensation Act*. Modeled after the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF), the new fund created by this legislation would provide compensation for injuries to any individual, or their families, who are deemed an essential worker and required to leave their home to perform services and who became ill or died as a result of COVID-19.

“Our nation’s dedicated health care workers, first responders, letter carriers and legions of other vital essential workers are serving on the front lines to care for patients battling

COVID-19 infections and keep our country running during a deadly pandemic that has already killed more than half a million Americans,” said Senator Duckworth. “While we have to do much more to protect these men and women as they take on greater risks during this pandemic, we also need to recognize the sad reality that our nation has a responsibility to take care of the loved ones of those essential workers who perish as a result of their decision to go back to work to help others.”

“On September 11th, it was the firefighters and officers who ran into the burning buildings to save lives. Over the last year, as New York City and the country battled the COVID pandemic, it is hospital workers – nurses, doctors, EMS, janitorial staff, pharmacists, technicians – and all essential workers who have put so much on the line to keep us safe and healthy,” said Congresswoman Maloney. “They have been there for us, and we must assure them that if they or their loved ones become ill with COVID, we’ll be there to support them, too.”

“We owe our frontline workers more than just words, but real action to recognize their sacrifice and service. Over this past year, feeding our families, staying safe, and surviving illness would have been impossible without these essential workers,” said Blumenthal. “These heroes on the front line vary widely in jobs from health care professionals and first responders to grocery store employees, delivery drivers, janitorial staff, and transit workers – what they have in common is clearly uncommon courage and dedication. Frontline workers continue to put their lives on the line, and they and their families deserve more than platitudes – they’ve earned full, fair compensation for the risks they’ve taken on our behalf.”

“The NRLCA once again is pleased to support the Pandemic Heroes Compensation Act to compensate essential workers harmed in the line of duty. Rural letter carriers, as well as other postal employees, are part of the backbone of America and provide an essential service to Americans at every address,” said Ronnie Stutts, President, National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association (NRLCA). “USPS employees perform their duties day in and day out and risk the health of themselves and their families to keep America running. Throughout the pandemic, the Postal Service and its employees have been essential, front-line workers delivering packages, stimulus checks, and ballots; as well as over 1 billion packages of medication each year. We applaud Chairwoman Maloney, Chairman Nadler, and Senator Duckworth for continuing to recognize the sacrifice that rural letter carriers and every other essential worker have made so that we can continue to be united as a nation and battle this pandemic together. We urge all lawmakers to support and quickly pass this important piece of legislation.”

Specifically, the *Pandemic Heroes Compensation Act* would:

- **Establish a compensation fund for all essential workers, personnel, and their families**, across all industries, that were required to leave their homes to perform their services and became ill or died as a result of COVID-19;
- **Support essential workers affected by COVID-19 across the country** in their recovery by providing critical financial assistance to help with medical costs, loss of employment, loss of business, replacement services, and burial costs;
- **Authorize appropriated funds as needed** for 5 years with the fund permanently closing one fiscal year after the Special Master determines that no additional claims can be filed;
- **Create a new website and office** developed and administered by a Special Master to assist in the application process; and
- **Maximize compensation for essential workers and their families** by simplifying the application process to get those affected back on their feet.

Family members who share homes with essential workers and became sick through contact with the essential worker would also be eligible to file a claim. The compensation application would allow claimants to provide information regarding the extent of their loss for consideration. Eligible individuals would receive compensation no later than 20 days after approval.

The *Pandemic Heroes Compensation Act* is endorsed by the following organizations: Service Employees International Union (SEIU); Uniformed Fire Officers Association (UFOA); DC37; National Rural Letter Carriers Association (NRLCA); SMART, the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers; United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW); American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE).