

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NYC CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL JOINS NEW YORK CONGRESSIONAL MEMBERS AND NYS AFL-CIO TO RECOMMEND REAPPOINTMENT OF 9/11 HEALTH CZAR

Labor and Elected Leaders also call for Quick Passage of the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act Reintroduced in Congress

New York, February 23, 2009 -- Today, New York City Central Labor Council President Jack Ahern, Reps. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), New York State AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes, 9/11 responders, lower Manhattan residents and others gathered near Ground Zero to encourage President Obama to reappoint Dr. John Howard as the federal government's 9/11 Health Coordinator. The group also urged Congressional passage of federal legislation (H.R. 847, the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act) to provide critical health care and compensation for those sickened or injured in the aftermath of 9/11. While the Members of Congress hope to pass the bill this year, leadership is still needed in Washington to make sure that current federal 9/11 health programs continue to provide care to ailing 9/11 first responders, lower Manhattan residents, workers, students and others.

"Today, on behalf of the thousands of working people who gave so much for our country in the days, weeks and months following 9/11, the labor movement is calling for the quick passage of long-overdue federal government guarantee to cover the on-going, comprehensive medical monitoring, treatment and compensation for workers and all those exposed who are still suffering from the long-term health effects from the toxins of 9/11," said NYC Central Labor Council President Jack Ahern. "As we can all see every day around Ground Zero, we are rebuilding this city. Now, we must rebuild the health of those who are sick because of the terrorist attacks on our country. No American can wish to be as courageous as those who seized the moment and prevented even more lives from being lost."

"We owe the heroes of September 11th the best we have to offer," said NYS AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes, "and when it comes to protecting their health and well-being, those heroes have no greater champion than Dr. Howard. We respectfully call upon President Obama to reappoint Dr. Howard, whose experience, knowledge and intellect, coupled with his ability to work with both political parties, makes him the ideal choice to lead this most important initiative."

"The Bush administration made a good decision in appointing Dr. Howard and a typically bad move in letting him go. In fact, I think he was dismissed in large part because he was making a strong effort to care for people with 9/11-related ailments," said Rep. Maloney. "We hope to pass comprehensive 9/11 health legislation this year with President Obama's support, but in the meantime we need someone to take charge of 9/11 health issues and ensure that proper care is given to those in need. I can't think of a better person for the job than Dr. Howard, who built the federal government's 9/11 health programs from the ground up. He is trusted on both sides of the aisle and would be an outstanding addition to President Obama's team."

"There is still much work to be done in coordinating and administering health care for 9/11 first responders, workers, residents, students and others," said Rep. Nadler. "Dr. John Howard has demonstrated expertise and skill in overseeing 9/11 health efforts and there was never any justifiable reason for removing him from his post. I wholeheartedly recommend re-hiring Dr. Howard for the job. Meanwhile, let's pass the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act so that we can provide critical health care and resources for those now sick because of 9/11."

"All those affected by 9/11 deserve adequate health care and it is essential that we have a knowledgeable, experienced champion for this issue," said Rep. McMahon. "Dr. John Howard has been handling 9/11 health care projects since 2006 and knows, better than anyone, the critical need for comprehensive health care programs. It is clear based on the number of people affected by 9/11 that we need a strong, central figure to coordinate our 9/11-related health projects and Dr. John Howard is without a doubt the best choice."

Background

Dr. Howard, the former director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), was put in charge of federal 9/11 health programs in February 2006 by Michael Leavitt, then Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In July 2008, the Bush Administration informed Dr. Howard that he would not be reappointed to a second term as NIOSH Director, despite praise from industry and labor leaders regarding Dr. Howard's service protecting American workers.