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The Fight For Zadroga

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After 9/11: The Fight For Zadroga

By Naeisha Rose

Synopsis

The attack on the World Trade Center cost many first responders and volunteers, like Ken George, a retired highway crewmember who was part of the search and rescue, to lose their health. Ken had needs a respirator for his restricted airway disease, he is on 33 medications and five years ago he had a heart attack. Bi-weekly or monthly, he visits a doctor for his PTSD, his heart, his lungs and general healthcare.

After seeing the devastating conditions that the responders like Ken worked in, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-12) worked tirelessly with many politicians, both Democrats and Republicans, to pass a health and compensation act.

After nine years, the Zadroga Act, which subsidizes medical bills and compensates victims and their families for loss of income, was passed in 2010. On Sept. 30 the bill expired, and on Oct. 3, 2016 the money will trickle out. If the bill is not renewed, Ken will have to spend \$3000 a month on copays alone. Ken use to help lobby for the bills renewal, however, since his weight gain from the combination of medications he is unable to travel far distances.

John Feal, a first responder and the founder of the FealGood Foundation, a non-profit that helps first responders and volunteers across the country helps to continue the fight in Congress when other responders can't. He helped to get the first bill passed and is fighting to make sure it gets extended permanently or at least for 25 years, which would cover the life expectancy of responders.

The FealGood Foundation was created after he lost his foot during the 9/11 cleanups. Since then, he has fought for responders and their families to get compensated for their efforts no matter where they are across the 50 states. Feal has went to Washington D.C. to testify and help others prove that their health issues are 9/11 related over 22 times this year, and he believes that they should get help from the government that sent them to the World Trade Center site even though the air quality was poor.

Politicians like Marco Rubio, Lindsey Graham, Ted Cruz, Rand Paul, Mitch McConnell and Paul Ryan don't support extending the bill and have been silent and inactive about it. The lack of support comes from not being able to profit from a bill meant to help others.

What happened during 9/11 affects the livelihood of many of the first responders that are still alive today, like Ken. It is a daily battle for them to function. As a result of his multiple 9/11 health-related issues, Ken can no longer provide for his

family of nine. Despite some people believing the bill to be a money grab, many of these responders simply want to make sure that their families are taken care of, even when they are gone.

Ken hopes that this bill will be reenacted and that he will no longer have to attend any more funerals. His wife, Cynthia, who had to quit her job as a restaurant worker because of his PTSD takes care of him, and struggles to reconnect with him. Many of George's friends who worked with him in the cleanup crew have passed away, and this leaves him very few people to talk with about his horrifying experiences.

This documentary will follow what is being done to not only reinstate the bill, but also make it permanent. Politicians across the aisle have worked together to enact the first iteration of the bill, which provided \$4 billion in coverage for families affected, but that was an uphill battle that took nine years to take place in the first place and the bill was only mandated for five years. There is opposition from some Republican politicians of the bill being reinstated, because it is now covering more diseases and many responders want it to be permanent if enacted again.

Treatment

After 9/11: The Fight For Zadroga will begin with a broadcast of 9/11, followed by Ken George describing what it was like to be down at the World Trade Center and how that affected his health.

To further emphasize how responders weren't prepared for cleaning the area and didn't realize the danger they would be in. This would be combined with footage of first responders using little to no protection while cleaning up the rubble.

Carolyn Maloney will help us to understand what was done to help responders from the political end, how it was an uphill to get the bill passed and what will happen if nothing is done to extend it. I want to use footage of her at Capitol Hill with people rallying and at a press conference fighting to get the bill renewed.

Dr. Mike Crane, Medical Director of Mount Sinai's World Trade Center wing, will be the person to elaborate on the health conditions of the responders and volunteers. He will also represent what the health responders will lose, a doctor well versed in 9/11 conditions that other physicians do not specialize in. He also knows the amount of responders, volunteers and ordinary citizens that were affected by the 9/11 attacks. He also provides statistics on the illnesses.

Cynthia George is the anchor for her family. She takes care of Ken, her children, her ill mother-in-law and her granddaughter. She handles the bills and how money is spent. While Ken talks about his struggle with his health, she talks about how his health affected the family and their relationship.

John Feal is the activist of the story. He does what Ken is physically incapable of doing any longer. He is the one that goes to D.C. to rally with other responders and Carolyn Maloney. He's also the speaker at the first responders' park in Nesconset, Long Island that memorializes those that lost their battle to 9/11 related diseases.

At the memorials, which are held twice a year, widows, children, responders and current members of the FDNY, NYPD and other agencies with first responders attend these events to acknowledge the recently deceased, and remember those that have fallen.

The film will end with George saying how important it is to get this bill passed, how he wants to see his granddaughter finish high school intercut with pictures of fallen friends and his granddaughter. It will also end with the result of the bill passing or not passing.

Structure and Style

This will be an advocacy documentary. It will feature traditional interviews with experts, politicians and the advocates involved. There will be archival footage, statistics and b-roll with Ken and his family, at the memorials, the rally and press conferences at D.C. There will be moments with Ken at home with his family.

The viewer will learn about what happened after 9/11 to the health responders. They will get to hear their stories, learn about their diseases, how they are coping or not coping and see the family members that are affected. The viewers will learn about the politics involved and the health statistics. They will also get to see one family's struggles and how 9/11 changed them.

Audience

The audience will be for all Americans. What happened on 9/11 affected responders across the country in every state. It will shed light on why so many responders are dying, what could be done and the necessity of having 9/11 doctors that are specialized in helping these victims. This is a country whose bureaucracy is filled with red tape and political infighting in a time when Congress has been its sluggish and has consistently failed to put its constituents first. This is especially true when it comes to anything that has to do with how money is allocated for the welfare of its civilians, even those that put their lives on the line to serve their country in a time of need. This film will explore what happens when people try to fight past the red tape for what's right. Will Congress do the right thing? How long will it take them to do it, if at all? How many more lives will be lost in the process, and how many have been lost so far? These are the questions we want viewers to ask, to learn about and hopefully make them take action that will help these responders towards a better livelihood with the extension of the Zadroga Bill.

