



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 767

Resolution calling upon the Congress of the United States to reopen, and duly publicize, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Mortgage and Rental Assistance program, which expired by law on May 30, 2002 and whose special 9/11 implementation was terminated on January 31, 2003, and to extend the program's deadline for filing for benefits for an additional six months, as it relates to New York City workers suffering financial hardship from the consequences of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and, also, to expand the program's geographic boundaries to include all affected New York City workers living and working in any of the City's five boroughs, and, furthermore, to permanently reestablish and reauthorize funding for the Mortgage and Rental Assistance program to address major disasters in the future by passing H.R. 827, also known as "the Mortgage and Rental Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2003", introduced by Representative Carolyn B. Maloney.

By Council Members Gerson, Barron, Brewer, Clarke, Fidler, Jackson, Katz, Liu, Nelson, Quinn, Recchia, Jr., Sanders, Jr., Serrano and Weprin

Whereas, The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Mortgage and Rental Assistance program (MRA) was created to cover mortgage and rent payments for victims who have suffered financial hardship, and face eviction from their homes, as a result of events declared by the President of the United States to be a major disaster; and

Whereas, FEMA's MRA program expired on May 30, 2002 pursuant to the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000; and
Whereas, FEMA's 9/11 implementation of MRA, which was unaffected by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 because the 9/11 disaster was declared prior to the MRA expiration date of May 30, 2002, was terminated by the agency on January 31, 2003; and
Whereas, Participation in the 9/11 MRA was restricted to approximately 11,000 of the possible 100,000 workers who were financially affected by the terrorist attacks, because of limited public outreach, a limited registration period and arbitrary restrictions on eligibility; and
Whereas, According to articles in The New York Times on April 26, 2002 and May 2, 2002, program participation was further constrained by the admitted dissemination of misinformation by FEMA officials and by a 70% application rejection rate that stemmed largely from management blunders, poor coordination and newly implemented standards of evidence for applicants that were arbitrary and more extreme than standards used in the past; and
Whereas, FEMA's decision to limit MRA benefits, by only serving applicants who could "prove" that their loss of income was a "direct result" of the 9/11 attacks, was particularly constraining and, according to The New York Times on April 26, 2002, "goes beyond the laws and regulations that have traditionally governed disaster relief efforts."; and
Whereas, FEMA's decision to offer MRA benefits to only one part (Lower Manhattan) of one of the fifteen counties deemed "disaster areas" by President Bush following the 9/11 attacks, further limited program participation; and
Whereas, These decisions by FEMA were not made pursuant to any existing statutes; and
Whereas, Many potential applicants, who were dissuaded from participation by these restrictions and constraints, continue to suffer from the economic after-effects of the terrorist attacks and are in serious need of program benefits to which many may be legally entitled; and
Whereas, FEMA, even though it was aware of the unwarranted exclusions caused by the aforementioned restrictions and constraints, and was governed only by President Bush's directive to "do whatever it takes" to help New Yorkers in the aftermath of 9/11, arbitrarily terminated the 9/11 implementation of the program on January 31, 2003; and
Whereas, The FEMA MRA program expired in its entirety, on May 30, 2002 pursuant to the passage of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, and no longer exists as a source of assistance to victims of future disasters; and
Whereas, Without the assistance provided by the MRA program after 9/11, flawed as it was, New Yorkers would have faced even more financial hardship and evictions; and
Whereas, Applications for MRA program assistance by thousands of people in the aftermath of 9/11 clearly demonstrates the extreme necessity of this program following a disaster and the need to reinstate it; and
Whereas, On February 13, 2003, only two weeks after FEMA terminated the MRA program, Representative Carolyn B. Maloney introduced bill H.R.827 in the United States House of Representatives and it was referred to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure; and
Whereas, H.R.827, known as the "Mortgage and Rental Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2003", would reestablish the MRA program; and
Whereas, Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge and other officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Federal Bureau of Investigations Director Robert Mueller III, Central Intelligence Agency Director George Tenet and Senator Bob Graham of Florida, have characterized the probability of similar terrorist attacks in the future as inevitable, only a matter of "when", and not "if", indicating their firm belief that future attacks are certain to occur; and
Whereas, We must prepare in advance to deal with the probability of future terrorist attacks and be ready to provide emergency disaster assistance to their victims, now therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of The City of New York calls upon the Congress of the United States to reopen, and duly publicize, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Mortgage and Rental Assistance program which expired by law on May 30, 2002 and whose special 9/11 implementation was terminated on January 31, 2003, and to extend the program's deadline for filing for benefits for an additional six months, as it relates to New York City workers suffering financial hardship from the consequences of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and, also, to expand the program's geographic boundaries to include all affected New York City workers living and working in any of the City's five boroughs, and, furthermore, to permanently reestablish and reauthorize funding for the Mortgage and Rental Assistance program to address major disasters in the future by passing H.R. 827, also known as "the Mortgage and Rental Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2003", introduced

by Representative Carolyn B. Maloney.