



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1160-2003, **Version:** *

Res. No. 1160

Resolution calling on President Bush, Congress and Governor Pataki to provide New York City with its fair share of funding to develop and implement an emergency volunteer corps.

By The Speaker (Council Member Miller) and Council Members Vallone, Avella, Baez, Boyland, Clarke, Fidler, Foster, Gentile, Gerson, Gioia, Koppell, Liu, Lopez, Martinez, Monserrate, Nelson, Perkins, Recchia, Rivera, Seabrook, Stewart, Weprin, Yassky, Brewer and Quinn

Whereas, The events of September 11, 2001 demonstrated the spirit of volunteerism and selflessness of New Yorkers, and it has become abundantly clear since that day that a huge wellspring of vital emergency response skills and abilities remain untapped among residents of this city, who eagerly await the opportunity to assist in the city's emergency planning and to be part of any emergency response; and

Whereas, On November 1, 2003, more than two years after September 11, the City's Department of Emergency Management, the mission of which is to coordinate and prepare city agencies and the public for disasters and other emergencies, finally announced a plan to train New York City's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), a federal initiative that assists individuals to take a more active role in emergency response and preparedness, and that in New York City comprises 15 community groups, such as ambulance corps and senior centers, in a pilot program; and

Whereas, This worthwhile initiative, funded by city taxpayers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), does not, unfortunately, go far enough to include and recruit all New Yorkers who wish to take part in an emergency response; and

Whereas, A more concerted local effort is needed to recruit and train New Yorkers willing to assist in an emergency, and such program must include creation of a medical and mental health corps, a language and cultural corps that coordinates volunteers with language and cultural skills and a tech corps that coordinates volunteers with technology skills; development of partnerships with private and not-for-profit organizations and institutions, unions, community leaders, businesses and others to develop an effective and comprehensive volunteer emergency response program; development of a website that includes on-line registration forms for emergency volunteers; and the holding of regular meetings in each of the boroughs to highlight the city's program; and

Whereas, Such a vital and necessary program should be funded by the federal government, particularly in light of this city's continued vulnerability to terrorist attack, and the significant sums of money expended by the New York City Police Department to conduct counter-terrorism activities; and

Whereas, President Bush has established several mechanisms for localities to receive funds for such vital programming, the most prominent being Citizen Corps, a community-based initiative coordinated by FEMA to engage all citizens in homeland security and community outreach, with such corps directly managed and organized by local governments or not-for-profits; and

Whereas, However, as with the bulk of homeland security funding, this money passes through the states, and as of this summer, New York City had only received seven percent of New York State's total funding for Citizen Corps in Fiscal Year 2003, or \$68,000 of \$980,000, and only 21 percent of federal funds for the related CERT program in Fiscal Year 2003, or \$185,000 of \$879,000; and

Whereas, On November 3, 2003, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) made an additional \$1.6 million available to New York State for Citizen Corps, thus granting Governor Pataki an opportunity to demonstrate his understanding of the terrorist threat faced by New York City and providing this city with its fair share of federal Citizen Corps dollars; and

Whereas, The inequity of federal funding is compounded because New York State has not received its fair share of funds because the federal grants are overwhelmingly allocated based on population instead of risk assessment and target potential, such that New York State only received 4% of the total federal funding for Citizen Corps, levels similar to Texas, Florida and Illinois, states that do not face a similar terrorist threat; and

Whereas, The provision of small amounts of federal funding for New York City's unique needs has become common practice; in fact, the federal government's failure to recognize New York City's unique and unfortunate role as a prime target for terrorism prompted this Council to pass a resolution on April 9, 2003 calling on Congress to distribute homeland security funding directly to New York City, and other localities, based on risk assessment and target potential, to ensure maximum receipt of such federal funding; and

Whereas, Although DHS recently announced the Urban Area Security Initiative for Federal Fiscal Year 2004, which would provide \$725 million to urban areas and metropolitan transit systems most vulnerable to terrorist attack, the grant portion appropriated for the New York City area - \$47 million for New York City and \$17.5 million for rail transit systems that serve the City and its surrounding area - is significantly less than New York City received under the same initiative in Federal Fiscal Year 2003; and

Whereas, The President and Congress must make New York City a top priority when allocating and disbursing important anti-terrorism funds, and the same is true of money used to establish vital volunteer opportunities for New York City residents; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the city of New York calls on President Bush, Congress and Governor Pataki to provide New York City with its fair share of funding to develop and implement an emergency volunteer corps.