



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0658-2004, **Version:** *

Res. No. 658

Resolution urging Governor Pataki, in coordination with Mayor Bloomberg, to request the \$4.45 million Congress made available to New York State for the Project Liberty Program in the FY 2005 Homeland Security Appropriations bill which was signed into law by the President, in order to continue the provision of counseling to personnel, families and retirees of the New York City Fire Department and the New York City Police Department who were seriously traumatized by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City, and thereby making more funds available to support the continuation of Project Liberty to meet the needs of the general public.

By Council Members Lopez, Fidler, Foster, Gennaro, Jackson, James, Nelson, Quinn, Recchia, Sanders and Seabrook

Whereas, The terrorist attacks that occurred in New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001 shocked the nation, affecting many thousands of New Yorkers, including friends and relatives of those who lost their lives, people who were injured, those who escaped, rescue and relief workers, people who saw it happen from nearby streets or windows, people who saw it over and over again on television and people who lost their jobs or homes as a result of the tragedy; and

Whereas, Project Liberty, an outreach and crisis counseling program that provided, free of charge, supportive therapy to individuals, families and groups affected by the attacks, was created shortly after the disaster and funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); and

Whereas, Project Liberty provided services in New York City and ten surrounding counties, including Delaware, Dutchess, Nassau, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester, and was administered by the New York State Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH) in collaboration with local governments and provider agencies; and

Whereas, Project Liberty offered face-to-face outreach crisis counseling and education services, helping disaster survivors to understand that in most cases their emotional reactions were normal and helping them to

develop coping skills that would allow them to return to their pre-disaster levels of functioning; and

Whereas, Under the program, more than one million New Yorkers received free, anonymous, face-to-face counseling and public education services from more than 100 mental health providers, as well as many other community service organizations; and

Whereas, New York State discontinued Project Liberty service delivery activities after December 31, 2003, except for two specific populations, members of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) and New York City school children; and

Whereas, New cases of post-traumatic stress related to 9/11 are still being diagnosed and the director of the FDNY Counseling Services Unit and other medical experts have said that extending the program is important because symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder often do not surface until years after a tragic event; and

Whereas, On September 14, 2004 Senator Hillary Clinton sponsored an Amendment, co-sponsored by Senator Schumer, to the FY 2005 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill that would require FEMA to allocate at least \$4.45 million for continued Project Liberty mental health counseling services for FDNY and New York City Police Department (NYPD) personnel; and

Whereas, The U.S. Congress recently voted to provide in an amendment to the FY 2005 Homeland Security Appropriations bill \$4.45 million in funding for the Project Liberty Program in New York State, in order to continue the provision of counseling services to personnel, families and retirees of the FDNY and the NYPD who were seriously traumatized by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City; and

Whereas, Governor Pataki must request, in coordination with the Mayor of New York City, that these funds be made available to New York State, in order for the State and the City to receive this funding; and

Whereas, The Associated Press reported that both Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg opposed the funding amendment, stating the State and the City would pay for these services; and

Whereas, If the State and City accessed these federal funds to support the continuation of Project

Liberty for FDNY and NYPD rescue workers, rather than using State and City funds for these purposes, then State and City funds would become available to support the continuation of Project Liberty for the general public; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges Governor Pataki, in coordination with Mayor Bloomberg, to request the \$4.45 million Congress made available to New York State for the Project Liberty Program in the FY 2005 Homeland Security Appropriations bill which was signed into law by the President, in order to continue the provision of counseling to personnel, families and retirees of the New York City Fire Department and the New York City Police Department who were seriously traumatized by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City, and thereby making more funds available to support the continuation of Project Liberty to meet the needs of the general public.

JC
LS#1862
October 21, 2004