Key Vote YES on the Lee and Paul Amendments to the Permanent Authorization of the September 11th Victims Compensation Fund Act, H.R. 1327

On behalf of FreedomWorks’ activist community, I urge you to contact your senators and ask them to vote YES on the Lee amendment (#928) and the Paul amendment (#929) to the Permanent Authorization of the September 11th Victims Compensation Fund Act, H.R. 1327, offered by Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) and Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), respectively. These two amendments complement each other, ensuring that the reauthorization of the Victims Compensation Fund (VCF) is fiscally responsible and held accountable to its purpose.

The Lee amendment would authorize $10.18 billion for the VCF over the next ten years (through 2029), which is the amount that the Congressional Budget Office has estimated is necessary for that time period. From 2030 through 2092, the Lee amendment would authorize another $10 billion for claims. This simple appropriation of funds would prevent the bill from, as written currently, giving a government program a completely blank check from Congress.

As the branch of government given explicit constitutional power to tax and spend money, Congress should not be abdicating this power to the executive branch, especially not in an unchecked, reckless manner that, as we see far too often, results in misuse of funds and lack of accountability. Congress should instead work to, as the Lee amendment does through a cap, ensure that funds are used appropriately and responsibly, especially for victims of the September 11th terrorist attacks.

The Paul amendment would further the fiscal responsibility in the Lee amendment by requiring that the reauthorization of the VCF does not add new debt. “Any new spending that we are approaching, any new program that's going to have the longevity of 70, 80 years, should be offset by cutting spending that's less valuable,” Sen. Paul said on the Senate floor last Thursday.

His amendment would follow through on this by offsetting $10 billion of spending from the bill, through a sequester on mandatory spending of $2 billion per year for five years. It explicitly
exempts Medicare, Social Security, the VA, World War II benefits, interest payments, and school lunches from any cuts under the amendment, meaning that the cuts must come from elsewhere.

Critics of Sens. Lee and Paul complained that these two senators are the reason that the vote on passage of this legislation was moved to this week instead of last. However, to set the record straight, as Sen. Lee stated on the Senate floor last Thursday, “[T]his is something that we could vote on in a matter of minutes, fifteen minutes or so, and then move on to final passage. We could, in fact, accomplish all of this today, before we adjourn for the weekend. This is in fact what I would prefer. I think finishing our work on this bill to protect victims and first responders is worth a half hour of our time.” It was instead other senators who did not find the issue worth staying a few minutes or hours later for on a Thursday, before going home for a long weekend.

We thank Sens. Lee and Paul for standing up to legislate in the best interests of Americans and particularly of the beneficiaries of the Victims Compensation Fund. FreedomWorks will count the votes for the Lee and Paul amendments on our 2019 Congressional Scorecard. The scorecard is used to determine eligibility for the FreedomFighter Award, which recognizes Members of the House and Senate who consistently vote to support economic freedom and individual liberty.

Sincerely,

Adam Brandon
President, FreedomWorks