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N.Y. reps lose bid for 'quick fix' relief funds

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WASHINGTON — New York lawmakers last night were denied in their effort to win a quick $11 billion cash infusion for rebuilding, in the face of White House efforts to block new spending on the devastated downtown area.

President Bush and Republican leaders prevailed against New York in a 33-31 House Appropriations Committee vote.

Rep. John Sweeney (R-N.Y.), one of two GOP committee members who sided with Democrats on the rebuilding aid, vowed to revisit the issue after Thanksgiving.

The proposal to tuck $11 billion in aid for New York into a separate budget bill was always a long shot.

Sweeney and another upstate Republican, Rep. John Walsh, defied President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney by voting in favor of the funding.

But the plan was destined to fail when few other Republicans joined their cause.

The vote capped days of intense lobbying that included visits to the White House yesterday by Sweeney, Walsh and Rep. Nita Lowey (D-Westchester).

Lowey called White House aid to date "table scraps," and Walsh said, "We definitely need more money."

Mayor-elect Michael Bloomberg is expected to discuss aid today when he makes his first post-election visit to Washington.

Bush had promised to steer $20 billion in federal cash to New York to help rebuild the devastation caused by the Sept. 11 attacks — but so far only $3.2 billion has been delivered.

Bush recently announced plans for another $6.3 billion for New York in coming months, but said the remainder will have to wait until March — or beyond.

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