NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

City Office Created for Survivors

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In response to pressure from surviving family members of the World Trade Center attack, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani announced yesterday the creation of a city office designed to help them navigate a frustrating network of aid.

Meanwhile, a group of about 30 family members of Sept. 11 victims met with Sen. Hillary Clinton and Rep. Peter King (R-Seaford) on Long Island to address tax-relief legislation and the distribution of federal grants.

Giuliani said the newly formed World Trade Center Family Assistance Office will provide consultants who will work with families at the Human Resources Administration in Lower Manhattan beginning tomorrow. Families can contact the office at 212-331-5974. The existing family assistance center at Pier 94 will remain in operation.

"New Yorkers and people from across the country and around the world have offered unprecedented financial and other support to the families," Giuliani said. "The Family Assistance Office will help coordinate the efforts of the families to obtain whatever financial assistance is available to them."

But Michael Cartier, acting president of Give Your Voice, a group comprising about 400 surviving families of civilian victims, was skeptical that the office would handle all of their concerns.

He and members of the group's board were scheduled to meet with city officials late yesterday to request that the families of non-uniformed victims be allowed to appoint a formal representative who would attend city meetings on matters related to World Trade Center aid.

The group also wants to know how the recovery process at Ground Zero and the Fresh Kills landfill works, receive assurances that no more families will "fall through the cracks" and be involved in planning for any memorial or other future development at the site.

Cartier, whose brother James was an electrician working in Tower Two, said some of the mostly working-class members of his group were losing their homes in the absence of a breadwinner.

"I think there should be one [Family Assistance Office] in every borough," he said of the city's new effort.

After the meeting in Melville, Clinton and King held a news conference where they pushed for Congress to agree by Christmas on a widely tailored tax exemption for victims' families.

The House and Senate have passed different versions of the bill, with the Senate version exempting victims from paying both income and payroll taxes. The House version of the bill doesn't include an exemption for payroll taxes, paid by lower income earners.

Clinton also said that victims' families should be exempt from paying taxes on everything from charity grants to life insurance payments.

Calling the victims "front-line soldiers in our war against terrorism here at home," Clinton likened the tax exemption to what is provided for members of the military who die in the line of duty.

Irene Dickey of Manhasset, whose husband, Joseph, 50, was lost on Sept. 11, was happy to hear Clinton acknowledge that the police officers and firefighters weren't the only heroes.

"My husband served to wake our country up to terrorism," said Dickey, whose husband was a broker at Cantor Fitzgerald.

In a related development, New Jersey officials asked New York officials to give the families of trade center victims extensions to file notices of claims against the city. The 90-day deadline was to expire today.

Staff writer Dan Janison contributed to this story.

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