



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 21, 2010

Senators Vow to Block 9/11 Responders Bill

Oklahoma Republican Senator Tom Coburn announced that he will block the 9/11 Responders bill from coming to the Senate floor before Christmas. Coburn and his Republican colleagues have articulated numerous concerns with the bill, including the \$6.2 billion cost.



The bill, sponsored by New York Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer, provides compensation for first responders who became ill from the toxic dust at the site of the collapse of the two World Trade Center towers.

Intended to cover the health care costs for Ground Zero workers, the bill would be funded through fees on travelers to the United States and on imports and services from companies that are not members of the Agreement on Government Procurement, a treaty of the World Trade Organization.

Financing the legislation in this way is a marked change from that of the original bill.

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[Staten Island Live](#) reports, "The original bill would have required multinational companies incorporated in tax havens to pay taxes on income earned in the U.S. Bill supporters said that would close a tax loophole, but Republicans have branded it a tax increase."

Even after changes to the funding were made, however, Republicans remained opposed, demanding that the bill be paid for with spending cuts.

A Republican filibuster halted the bill in its tracks on December 9, but Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid promised to bring it back before the end of the lame duck session. While the end of the session is technically on January 4, most Senators leave for the holidays, making a vote after Christmas nearly impossible.

Concerns raised by Republicans over the bill's cost led lawmakers to scale back the price of the legislation from \$7.4 billion to \$6.2 billion.

In addition to those concerns, however, the [Wall Street Journal](#) reports, "[Coburn] and others in his party have questioned whether the money would overlap with workers' compensation and other aid provided to September 11 first responders."

To address these concerns, Coburn has indicated that he would like the bill to first make its way through [committee](#) rather than being rammed through the remaining days of the lame duck session. Republican Senator Mike Enzi of Wyoming voiced similar sentiments:

I'm not trying to fight it, I'm trying to get it right. There are 30 things that ought to be changed real quick in committee but [which would be] very difficult on the floor. To finish a bill at this point of time, we're not going to be able to amend it.

Today, Staten Island Congressman Michael McMahon joined with New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg



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and more than a dozen city lawmakers to urge the Senate to take up the legislation before the end of the week.

Staten Island Live explains, “McMahon and his colleagues in the House passed the original bill in September, but would have to consider any new version as the final days of the lame duck session wear down.”

At the conference, Mayor Bloomberg reminded the Senate that the 9/11 attacks were on America, not New York City:

They were acts of war, and they led us to war in Afghanistan. Caring for the men and women who rushed to our defense on that dark day, and in the days that followed, is nothing less than a national duty. America is too great a country to shirk this duty. We are too strong. Too proud. Too patriotic. And this is the week that we have to show it.

McMahon declared to a room full of press, “It will be a proud moment for me — not in any way bittersweet, but totally sweet — to cast my last vote as a member of this Congress for this bill.”

According to Senator Gillibrand, a vote is expanded on the 9/11 Responders bill once action on the START treaty is completed.

Photo: Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), right, and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) speak about a bill to assist 9/11 first responders at a news conference during an unusual Sunday session on Capitol Hill, Dec. 19, 2010: AP Images



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