



The following message was sent from Special Master Sheila Birnbaum to the VCF team.

July 21, 2016

VCF Team,

It has been a great privilege and honor for me to serve as Special Master of the 9/11 VCF for the last five years. With all of your steady and devoted hands, the claims process is now well-settled and proceeding apace, and new procedures have been set up to address the challenges of the recent re-authorization. I believe it is a good time to step down and hand the reins over to a new Special Master.

It has been so gratifying to work alongside all of you over the past five years. Your tireless and compassionate efforts to serve the thousands who were injured as a result of the 9/11 attacks and to deliver fair compensation to claimants have been remarkable. You may remember that when we first started the VCF, we had no offices, no computers or staff; we were without protocols or procedures to guide us in our work. With the help and dogged determination of all of you, we have overcome many bumps in the road as we put the VCF on solid footing in serving the 9/11 community. I am enormously proud of your accomplishments.

I want to especially thank Deputy Special Master, Debby Greenspan for her leadership and skills in helping set up our systems and policies. Debby has been there from the beginning working around the clock to make the VCF a success. A special thank you also to Jon Olin of the Department of Justice for all of his help in getting us started. I am indebted to others, too numerous to name, for all of their efforts to make the VCF responsive to the needs of the 9/11 community.

I am also especially grateful to Francis Gottfried, former Director of the VCF's New York office, for her herculean efforts at community outreach and running our Hearings process; to Stefanie Langsam, our new Deputy Special Master, for all her previous efforts in leading our communications efforts and establishing and supporting many aspects of our operations; and to Jordy Feldman, Rick Brooks, Nell McCarthy, Pat Houser, and Colleen King for their leadership, advice and incredibly hard work.

But none of the success of the VCF would be possible without the everyday efforts of the unsung heroes of the VCF, the claims reviewers and their supervisors, those on the Helpline who answer thousands of calls in a courteous and helpful manner; to the nurses who review medical records; those who process the mail; the IBM systems team; and the payment team who make sure that payments are processed accurately and timely. It does take a village to process claims in a fair, accurate and consistent way. Let there be no doubt: we have the best village possible to accomplish the goals of the VCF. I will truly miss you all.

I also want to thank our Hearing Officers who on a pro bono basis, give so generously of their time and so professionally and fairly conduct our appellate hearings. Your compassion and even-handedness have been noted by many of the claimants. We are grateful to you all.

When I was first appointed Special Master by Attorney General Holder, I participated in a number of Town Halls to meet the potential claimants of the VCF and hear their concerns. It has been a real privilege to interact with the many community groups representing firemen, policemen, maintenance workers and others who were at the 9/11 sites. Along with the entire staff of the VCF, it has been our goal to fulfill our commitment to you that the Fund would be fair and transparent. I hope we have succeeded.



I would also like to thank the many lawyers we have interacted with on behalf of the claimants for their cooperation and professionalism. Together we have made the VCF a much better operation for the benefit of the claimants. Also, I am so grateful to the Senators from New York, Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, and Congressional Representatives Carolyn Maloney, Peter King and Jerrold Nadler and their staffs - all of whom have been so helpful in making the VCF a success.

I leave the VCF in very good shape. We have completed making full payments to the Group A claimants. We have started the transition to approving compensation for the Group B claimants. We have written new regulations and finalized a new claim form, which will make it easier to file and process the Group B claims. We have an incredible leadership team that I know will take the VCF ably and effectively into the future.

I leave the Fund with a heavy heart because I will miss my interactions and friendships with all of you, but will remain close to the VCF and continue to help the 9/11 community in any way I can. Thank you for this incredible opportunity to serve the 9/11 community.

Yours,

Sheila