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9/11 Ten Years Later

NY keeps growing, but critical U.S. largesse has limits

By Ronnie Lowenstein

In the days and weeks following September 11, many commentators predicted residents and businesses would flee New York City—not just those who were directly affected by the disaster, but others who felt it was too dangerous or too difficult to remain. Anecdotal accounts in the media seemed to support the notion of impending flight.

The exodus never happened. The city was able to keep its population—and its economy—growing. Indeed, it fared far better after September 11 than many had feared, just as we weathered the steep 2007–09 recession with less turbulence than much of the rest of the country.

While some of the city's resilience was the product of the strength and commitment of so many of those who live and work here, it was bolstered by extraordinary federal support. Immediately after the attack, Washington promised \$20 billion to aid in New York's recovery. Moreover, the city received a big assist during the most recent recession. Washington's bailout of Wall Street, designed to stabilize the nation's financial system, also propped up a key component of our local economy and tax base.

But it's unrealistic to expect a repeat of such federal largesse if the slow economic growth of the first half of this year. Washington is focused on its own fiscal problems, and it has been reducing support for state and local governments. As the city faces up to its next challenges, New Yorkers may need to dig even deeper to tap our own resolve and resources.

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