

# 9/11 Truth and the Families of 9/11 Victims. Supreme Court is the Last Hope for 9/11 widow Ellen Mariani

By [Craig McKee](#)

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They set it up perfectly.

A government “compensation fund” would pay off most families of 9/11 victims, preventing them from ever suing anyone for what happened to their loved ones.

And those who didn’t take the money would be pressured into accepting out-of-court settlements. Everyone would be kept quiet with gag orders and non-disclosure clauses, and the truth about 9/11 would never come out in a courtroom. Brilliant.

And it worked perfectly – except for Ellen Mariani.

The widow of Louis Neil Mariani, a passenger on Flight 175, which is alleged to have flown into the south tower of the World Trade Center, has been fighting to get to the truth about what happened to her husband that day.

Most have taken the money and gone away. Mariani is the last family member still fighting a wrongful death suit for losing a loved one on 9/11. Others, such as the family of 9/11 victim Mark Bavis, also fought for years before finally agreeing to settle. Here’s a [statement](#) from the family.

“It’s very hard to find justice in a corrupt legal system,” said Vincent Gillespie, secretary treasurer of the Ellen Mariani Legal Defense Fund, in an interview. “I feel a sense of obligation to help the country by talking about this stuff.”

Even with the enormous obstacles put in her way by dishonest lawyers, biased judges, and a generally corrupt legal system, Mariani remains determined to take her fight for justice as far as it can go. And that means to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Monday, she got some good news when her lawyer, Bruce Leichty, was granted an extension to file a request for an appeal with the Supreme Court. The deadline had been Sept. 23, but not enough funds had been raised by that point to proceed. With the extension, the defense fund now has until Nov. 1 to raise \$11,000 to meet a new filing deadline of Nov. 23.

The odds have been stacked against Mariani since she first filed her wrongful death suit in December 2001 – she was actually the first family member to do so. Around that time the government created the Victim Compensation Fund, which was administered by Special Master Kenneth Feinberg, who has run a number of high-profile compensation funds, including the one to compensate victims of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Feinberg was given total discretion to award what he thought was appropriate in each case, taking into account the future earning potential of the person who had been killed. The final result was that \$7 billion was paid out, with all but 94 families signing on.

An act of Congress transferred all 9/11 wrongful death suits to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, presided over by Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein. He has presided over almost all the 9/11 court cases. Hellerstein has been strongly criticized by Mariani and by the Bavis family in their statement above.

Originally, Mariani was administrator of her husband's estate and therefore had standing to sue. She was pushed out of that role by her husband's daughter, Lauren Peters in 2004. On the advice of her own attorney, Paul McEachern, Mariani didn't fight this. She would later regret this.

The loss of control over her husband's estate led to her initial suit being settled over her objections by the new administrator, lawyer John Ransmeier.

"It was Ransmeier who killed her case," Gillespie says.

Mariani has been fighting to regain standing in the case since she first learned of a possible settlement. The settlement, she contends, didn't adequately compensate for her losses nor did it give her any additional information about what led to her husband's death. She hopes the Supreme Court will revive the suit and give her standing once again.

Besides wanting the truth to be revealed in court, Mariani wants the Supreme Court to uphold her standing to challenge the settlement that was negotiated against her wishes.

It has come to light that while Ransmeier was representing Neil Mariani's estate in a suit against United Airlines, his law firm was also representing United in other cases. Mariani's claims of conflict of interest have been ignored by the court.

Thanks to a gag order imposed on Mariani and her lawyer by the New Hampshire probate court, she can't talk about the case publicly. The 9/11 family members who accepted settlements also had to sign non-disclosure clauses, which have the same effect as gag orders.

Hellerstein has been a controversial figure throughout. Mariani alleges he has done everything possible to keep any 9/11 lawsuits out of court. She has filed motions that contend that Hellerstein is in a conflict of interest position because his son, Joseph Hellerstein, works for an Israeli law firm that has connections ICTS International N.V., the parent company of Huntleigh USA, a firm that was involved with security at Logan Airport. Both Huntleigh and ICTS were defendants in Mariani's suit. (For more detail on Mariani's contentions about Hellerstein's connections, see [this court filing](#). Quite a number of court filings are archived on the web site [marianilawsuit.com](#).

It's a mess but not a surprise. This is, after all, the same legal system that allowed George W. Bush's cousin to preside over an appeal by April Gallop in her suit against Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld (former defense minister), and Richard Myers (former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff).

It is clear that the "legal system" is not at all concerned about truth or justice but only in hushing up the whole subject of 9/11 liability, not to mention keeping government lies from being exposed publicly.

Mariani was also talked into filing a [RICO suit](#) (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) in late 2003 against George W. Bush and other high government officials. The suit was quickly dismissed, and Mariani would later admit it had been a mistake to file it.

So the fight over the past few years has been to regain standing in the lawsuit and to have the estate pursue the wrongful death claim. She is also asking for compensation for her loss. Mariani is collecting Social Security and barely getting by while she pursues this.

"She's the last one, and she's hanging on by a thread," Gillespie says.

The government and the courts have done everything in their power to ensure that no 9/11 lawsuit for wrongful death ever gets into a courtroom. Ironically, the lawsuit of Larry Silverstein's World Trade Center Properties against both United and American Airlines, filed in 2008, will go to trial, according to the judge in that case. His name is, uh, Alvin Hellerstein. Hmm.

In that case, Silverstein, who took over as leaseholder of the World Trade Center just six weeks before 9/11, contends that negligence on the part of United Airlines and American

Airlines allowed the “terrorist attacks” to take place. Silverstein has already collected billions from his insurance company.

It seems that if you’re Larry Silverstein, you can find yourself on the judge’s good side and get your day in court. It does seem hard to believe that this case will ever go to trial. If it does, we know that neither side will be looking to upset the government’s official story of 9/11.

Journalist Christopher Bollyn has followed Mariani’s story very closely over the years, so anyone interested in learning more about this legal saga will find lots of good information on his web site, including his most recent [update](#) on her case.

On [marianilawsuit.com](http://marianilawsuit.com), you can read numerous court filings in the case that help to explain the details of this incredibly complicated case.

Time is short for Ellen Mariani’s last chance to get 9/11 into a courtroom. She needs \$11,000 by Nov. 1. Let’s see if we can help her get there.

*If you’d like to help her by donating to her defense fund, go to [marianilawsuit.com](http://marianilawsuit.com) (to donate by PayPal, credit or debit card). You can also make a check payable to: “Ellen Mariani Legal Defense Fund.”*

*Checks can be sent to:*

Ellen Mariani Legal Defense Fund  
P. O. Box 1284  
Greenfield, Mass. 01302

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