

Rothman Co-Sponsors, Votes for the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act

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Contacts: Kimberly Allen, (202) 226-8364; (202) 420-1524 [cell]

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Also Calls On Secretary Rice to Appoint Special Envoy to Sudan

(Washington, DC)— Last week, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) cast his vote in favor of the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act of 2006 (H.R. 3127), a sweeping bill aimed at stopping the genocide underway in Darfur, Sudan.

"The United States has a moral obligation to use all of its political and economic influence over the Sudanese government to help end the tragedy in Darfur. The crimes against humanity that are occurring there—from mass killings to rape to torture—are inhuman, immoral, and wrong. I continue to pray each and every day for all those whose lives have been damaged or stolen away as a result of the ongoing genocide," said Rothman.

The Darfur Peace and Accountability Act would support the deployment of troops from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) if the African Union (AU) peacekeeping force in Sudan requests them; urge passage of a UN Security Council resolution to increase the number of soldiers in the AU; prohibit U.S. assistance for any country providing military assistance to Sudan; and impose economic sanctions against the Sudanese government. It would also direct the President to block assets and deny visas and entry into the U.S. for individuals responsible for atrocities in Sudan and expresses the sense of Congress that genocide is occurring in Darfur.

This legislation passed the U.S. House of Representatives in a 416 to 3 vote on Wednesday, April 5. It now moves to the U.S. Senate, where passage is expected, and then will go to the President's desk to be signed into law.

Open Letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Upon passage of the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, Congress also learned that Sudan has expelled an aid group, the Norwegian Refugee Council, which runs the largest refugee camp in Darfur. In response to this new restriction on humanitarian aid for Sudanese refugees, Rothman joined 118 of his colleagues in signing a bipartisan letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urging her to appoint a Special Envoy for Sudan. This person would closely monitor the situation in Darfur and Southern Sudan, work to achieve the full implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended one of Africa's longest and bloodiest civil wars, and answer directly to Secretary Rice and the President.

"The Administration's active engagement was instrumental in bringing an end to the horrific civil war that took the lives of over two million people in southern Sudan. A bold effort is needed to try to bring about peace and security to the millions of people at risk in Darfur and to help hold the fragile CPA agreement together," Rothman and others write. "The appointment of a Special Envoy will send a clear message to Khartoum that the President continues to place a priority on Darfur and that he will not let the CPA fail. We ask that you appoint an envoy as quickly as possible."

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