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Authors Letter To DHS Secretary Tom Ridge; Requests Rationale for
Drastic Cut and Seeks Restoration of Funds

Washington, DC - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) is leading a group of New Jersey Senators and Congressmen in calling on Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge to supply an explanation for the significant cuts in homeland security funding for New Jersey next year and to provide the state with the monies necessary to protect New Jerseyans from future terrorist attacks. Rothman and eight of his New Jersey Congressional colleagues sent a letter this week to Secretary Ridge after learning that Jersey City's homeland security funds were cut by 60 percent, from \$17 million to \$6.7 million. Newark will also see a 17 percent reduction in funds, from \$14.9 million to \$12.4 million.

"We believe that the decision to cut homeland security funding for New Jersey is both incorrect and dangerous for a number of reasons. New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the nation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has placed more than a dozen New Jersey sites on the National Critical Infrastructure List and has called the area between Port Newark and Newark International Airport the 'most dangerous two miles in the United States when it comes to terrorism'." Rothman and eight of his New Jersey colleagues wrote to Ridge. "Our state in particular requires a greater portion of homeland security aid due to its vast number of potential targets of terror, such as the largest seaport on the East Coast, the third busiest airport in the country, our four nuclear power plants, and the six tunnels and bridges that connect New Jersey to New York City."

Rothman and the other Members of Congress (Congressman Robert Menendez, Senator Jon Corzine, Senator Frank Lautenberg, Congressman Rush Holt, Congressman Frank Pallone, Congressman Donald Payne, Congressman Bill Pascrell, and Congressman Robert Andrews) were especially concerned about the decision to cut homeland security funding for New Jersey just a few weeks after the Bush Administration had singled out New Jersey as a particularly vulnerable target for terrorists.

"As evidenced by the August 2004 decision to increase the Terror Alert Level for Newark in response to intelligence indicating that the Prudential Financial building there could be a target of an Al-Qaeda attack, New Jersey continues to face unique terrorism threats because of our critical infrastructure, assets, population density, and location," Rothman and his colleagues stated. "We therefore request that you provide us with the Department of Homeland Security's rationale for cutting UASI funding to New Jersey, specifically to Newark and Jersey City, and we urge you to promptly revisit this decision and provide New Jersey's First Responders with the funding that they require to keep our people safe from terrorist attacks."

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