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Congress Approves Record Level of Funding for Secure Our Schools Initiative

Washington, DC - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) today announced that Congress approved \$15 million for his national Secure Our Schools program. To date, Rothman has secured a total of \$35 million, including over \$2.1 million for New Jersey, for this important school safety grant program which he created in 2000. The funds are part of the final spending bill for Fiscal Year 2005.

"Secure Our Schools grants provide municipalities with the resources they need to strengthen school security so that children can focus on their schoolwork without having to look over their shoulders fearing that they may be attacked," Rothman stated. "As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I am proud to have worked to ensure that our children can attend school without the fear of violence. Across the country, 220 grants totaling nearly \$10 million were awarded in 2004 to purchase and implement school security measures. However, there are over 92,000 elementary and secondary public schools in the United States with unique security concerns, many of which need federal assistance to keep kids safe."

Rothman's Secure Our Schools Act is a voluntary, matching grant program that affords municipalities the opportunity to apply for federal funding for school safety grants. The grants can be used for metal detectors, locks, improved lighting, other deterrent measures, school security assessments, and security training for students and personnel. The federal government pays for 50 percent of the cost of the security measures, with the state or local government covering the remainder of the cost. The program enjoys broad bipartisan support and has grown steadily from \$5 million in 2002 to \$10 million in 2004, to now \$15 million for 2005.

"The Secure Our Schools program continues to have a significant impact on the reduction of school violence in this country, and I am pleased that the Congress has made a commitment to improving the access of local schools to these grants by approving \$15 million for this important program next year," said Rothman. "I know full well the importance of keeping our schools free of violence, which is why I authored the legislation that created these grants. Many towns have identified school safety enhancements they want to make, but can't afford. It is essential that the federal government help local property taxpayers pay for those security measures."

Since the Secure Our Schools program was first funded three years ago, New Jersey has received more than \$2.1 million for 33 different municipalities, making it the state with the highest level of funding per capita during the program's entire existence.

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