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Funds Will Strengthen Security At Schools In 18 Municipalities Throughout the State;

New Jersey Receives Most Funds Per Capita In The Nation

Hackensack, NJ - Following through on his commitment to improve school safety in New Jersey and across the country, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) today announced that 18 Garden State municipalities will receive a total of \$993,406 in federal grants this year as part of a national school safety program he got Congress to establish four years ago. Across the country, 220 grants totaling nearly \$10 million from Rothman's 'Secure Our Schools' program have been awarded this year. New Jersey is receiving more than 10 percent of the program's total funding, making it the state with the highest level of 'Secure Our Schools' funding per capita.

"These 'Secure Our Schools' grants will provide 18 New Jersey 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 said. "Schools should be safe-havens where our children can acquire the tools they need to succeed in life. As the father of two children who attend Bergen County public schools, I know full well the importance of keeping our schools free of violence, which is why I authored the legislation that created these grants. Since many municipalities 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."

Under the 'Secure Our Schools Act,' municipalities can apply for funds to install metal detectors, locks, improved lighting, and other deterrent measures at schools that will help keep students safe. Additionally, resources can be used for school security assessments, security training of personnel and students, and for improved coordination with local law enforcement officials. The 'Secure Our Schools Act' is a voluntary, matching grant program that calls for the federal government to pay for 50 percent of the security measures, with the state or local government covering the remainder of the cost. Municipalities that can demonstrate financial need can receive 100 percent of the security costs.

Two municipalities from Rothman's congressional district -- Elmwood Park (\$50,000) and Hackensack (\$61,072) -- have been awarded grants this year. Elmwood Park plans to use the funds to safeguard exits used after general school hours

to prevent crime at the high school and middle school. Hackensack plans to use the funds to purchase and install security cameras around the perimeter of the middle and high schools. Also locally, Paramus has been awarded \$50,000 and Paterson will receive \$90,000 from the program.

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. Rothman authored the 'Secure Our Schools Act' in 2000 and worked with Illinois Republican and then-House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde to get it enacted. Nationally, the program has received \$20 million over the past three years.

"In addition to providing enhanced security for the students at schools in 18 New Jersey municipalities, these 'Secure Our Schools' grants will save local taxpayers nearly \$1 million in school safety expenses," Rothman said. "I am pleased that my school security program is returning money to New Jersey at a higher level per capita than any other state in the nation. We need and deserve these federal funds."

In addition to Elmwood Park, Hackensack, Paramus, and Paterson, the following municipalities in New Jersey have been awarded 'Secure Our Schools' grants this year: Barnegat (\$80,000); Carteret (\$27,234); Egg Harbor (\$100,000); Gloucester (\$27,000); Irvington (\$35,000); Lacey (\$23,438); Lawrence (\$10,000); Linden (\$50,000); Little Egg Harbor (\$45,000); Maple Shade (\$250,000); Township of Middle (\$15,000); Millville (\$40,000); Mt. Holly (\$25,000); and Ocean City (\$14,662). Municipalities or school districts interested in applying for grants next year should contact Brendan Gill in Rothman's Hackensack office at 201-646-0808.

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