

Rothman, Colleagues Call On President Bush To Immediately Release New Federal Homeland Security Fund

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Rothman, Colleagues Call On President Bush To Immediately Release New Federal Homeland Security Funds for New Jersey Say That Police, Fire, & Other Emergency Personnel Need the Resources to Protect the Public During Heightened Terror Watch

Hackensack, NJ - Just days after the terror alert was raised for Northern New Jersey, including the Prudential headquarters in Newark, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) and six of his colleagues in the New Jersey congressional delegation sent a letter to President Bush calling for the immediate release of additional homeland security funds for the state. Specifically, Rothman and his colleagues called for the immediate release of funds from the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Urban Area Security Initiative, which provides funds to high-density regions that are of greater risk to a terrorist attack.

"The ongoing and increasing terror risk for the region we represent necessitates that our local and state governments are adequately equipped to deal with these threats," Rothman and his colleagues wrote in the letter. "For the past two years, inadequate funding for training and equipment has undermined the ability of the police, fire, and other emergency personnel to secure the high target areas around Newark and throughout New Jersey. As Secretary Ridge's announcement marks the first time since 9/11 that specific targets have been publicly identified, we find it only logical that funds would be distributed appropriately to ensure that those targets are adequately protected. These high-risk regions should not and cannot wait for additional funds, as we do not know how imminent the threat they face could be."

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, which allocates all of the discretionary funds in the federal budget, Rothman has worked hard to ensure that New Jersey gets as much federal money as possible for homeland security, thus far helping to secure more than \$228 million for New Jersey initiatives. Rothman has continuously fought to receive additional homeland security funds based on New Jersey's high-risk level for a terrorist attack. Currently, DHS allocates funding in two ways: one account which is based on population and is given to each state accordingly; and another account that sends money to states that are at a higher risk of a terrorist attack. Rothman is pushing for a change in the account structure so that federal funding is increased and prioritized for high-risk, high-threat areas instead of having precious homeland security dollars being disbursed by population to areas that are at little or no risk of a terrorist attack.

"I have fought and will continue to fight for New Jersey to receive additional homeland security funds based on potential terrorist targets within our state and because of our proximity to New York City," Rothman said. "New Jersey deserves more homeland security funds because it has, among other things, the largest seaport on the East Coast, the third busiest airport in the country, four nuclear power plants, and six tunnels and bridges connecting New Jersey to New York City that have a greater potential of being targeted in a terrorist act. Protecting critical infrastructure in New Jersey should be of a much higher priority than sending homeland security dollars to Iowa to safeguard cornfields."

In making their case to President Bush, Rothman and his colleagues highlighted the fact that New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the nation and has at least a dozen of the nation's sites that have already been placed on the FBI's "National Critical Infrastructure Site" list. New Jersey's critical infrastructure makes it even more vital that every safeguard is in place to protect against possible terrorist attacks.

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