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June 18, 2004

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Congressman Pledges To Use Position On House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations to Fight For Increased Military and Economic Assistance

Washington, DC - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) met this week with Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian on Capitol Hill during a briefing for members of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues. As a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, which allocates the United States' foreign aid, including money directed toward Armenia, Rothman told Oskanian that he would fight to increase both military and economic aid to Armenia above the level President Bush is offering.

"I was delighted to once again have the opportunity to speak directly with Foreign Minister Oskanian about the ways in which the United States can help create a secure and prosperous Armenia with American foreign aid," said Rothman, who himself is a member of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues. "Armenia is a true friend of the United States, supporting us without question in the global war on terrorism and with the war in Iraq. It is, therefore, appropriate and just that the United States provides Armenia with the assistance it needs to keep itself secure and to help create an economy that will grow and allow the people of Armenia to have a better quality of life.

Rothman said he is fighting President Bush's foreign aid request, which would only provide Armenia with \$2 million in military funding in Fiscal Year 2005, but would allocate \$8 million to Azerbaijan in military aid. Instead, Rothman is calling for Armenia to receive both \$8 million in military aid and \$75 million in economic assistance. The Bush Administration is calling for Armenia to receive only \$62 million in economic aid.

"As Armenia continues to make great strides toward creating a secure and sustainable democracy, it is imperative that the United States continues to provide sufficient financial support," Rothman said. "And in addition to providing aid to Armenia, it is time for the President to finally acknowledge the genocide that took place against the Armenian people. Calling the systemic murder of 1.5 million Armenians anything other than a genocide is to deny history and to dishonor the memories of all those who suffered so terribly."

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