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February 13, 2004

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To Replace Outdated Gear

Funds Will Boost Local Homeland Security, Save Local Taxpayers From Full Cost

Hawthorne, NJ - Continuing their efforts to bolster homeland security in Northern New Jersey by providing first responders with the resources they need to protect the public and themselves, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) and Congressman Bill Pascrell (D-NJ8) today announced they have helped secure a \$334,896 federal grant for the Hawthorne Volunteer Fire Department and a \$113,904 award for the West Paterson Fire Department. The two grants totaling \$448,800 come from the Assistance to Firefighter Grant Program (aka the FIRE grant program), established under legislation Pascrell authored and Rothman cosponsored, and will be used to replace outdated gear with state-of-the-art equipment.

"Ensuring that our local firefighters have the best equipment available to protect the public from all emergencies is a critical part of improving our nation's homeland security," said Rothman, a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus. "I was delighted to work with Congressman Pascrell to help bring these important federal funds to Hawthorne so that the Borough's firefighters won't have to rely on the current, outdated e equipment, but will instead have modern, state-of-the-art gear that will get the job done and best protect these heroes. I was pleased to bring home this money for Hawthorne's firefighters and the people of this great Borough who they protect."

"I wrote the FIRE Act specifically to help our communities support their bravest. I'm proud to stand here with my good friend Steve Rothman, who had the foresight to support this legislation from the beginning. For too long, the federal government turned a deaf ear to the pressing needs of fire departments and left any bills at the foot of the local property taxpayer. This grant demonstrates that through the FIRE Act, we have changed that shortsighted policy," said Pascrell.

The \$334,896 federal grant for Hawthorne will be used to replace outdated gear, which is so old that it is becoming unsafe for firefighters to use. Specifically, the grant will allow Hawthorne to purchase 56 new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) pieces with breathing air bottles that can last 35-50 minutes as opposed to the current equipment's capacity of 15-20 minutes. An additional 54 breathing air bottles will be purchased as well. The department will also buy 110 new face masks and breathing regulators, PASS alarms - which send off signals when a firefighter becomes immobilized, and other firefighter personal gear used when attending to fires and emergencies. Hawthorne will also purchase equipment that will allow its fire department for the first time to become a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) and Firefighter Assistance Team (FAST) so that it can help provide backup assistance during other emergencies in the region. West Paterson will use its \$113,904 grant to purchase 40 SCBA units. Both awards are matching grants, with the

federal portion covering 90 percent of the total cost of the equipment.

"In addition to protecting the people of Hawthorne and West Paterson, these federal grants save residents from 90 percent of the cost of replacing this firefighter gear, which otherwise would have been replaced by using only local taxpayer money," Rothman said.

Fire departments across the United States have received funds under the grant program, which was directly created as part of Pascrell's Firefighter Investment Response Enhancement (FIRE) Act, signed into law by President Clinton in 2000. With broad bipartisan support, Pascrell's program has grown from \$100 million in Fiscal Year 2001 to \$750 million in Fiscal Year 2004. New Jersey fire departments have already received a total of over \$25 million during the first three years of Pascrell's program. Unfortunately, President Bush's FY2005 Budget cuts the highly successful program by one-third and reduces the comprehensive scope of the program. Rothman and Pascrell have vowed to work with other members of Congress to ensure the program is expanded not decreased as the President would like.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the United States Fire Administration (USFA), which are both part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, are administering the funds. Local fire departments interested in applying for future Assistance to Firefighters Grant program grants are encouraged to call Rothman's Hackensack office at 201-646-0808 or Pascrell's Paterson office at 973-523-5152 for more information.

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