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Announces New Bipartisan Congressional Effort
To Have Feds Suspend Deportation Proceedings

Hackensack, NJ - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) hailed today's U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals decision to grant a stay of removal to Malachy McAllister, an Irish Catholic asylum-seeker, as well as his wife and three of their children. The ruling allows the McAllisters, who are currently living in Wallington, New Jersey, to stay in the United States until the Court hears their appeal for asylum. Rothman also announced that he and Congressman Peter King (R-NY3) are leading a bipartisan congressional coalition of 25 House members to have the federal government suspend deportation proceedings in order to keep the family in the United States indefinitely.

"I am delighted that the Third Circuit Court of Appeals agreed that the McAllister asylum case has merit and that the family can remain together in the United States while the Court considers their appeal for political asylum," Rothman said. "In granting a stay of removal, the Court has sent a message that it recognizes the McAllisters have legitimate concerns over their personal safety should they be forced to return to Northern Ireland. America has always been a safe haven for those who can prove that they will be subject to violence or death in their homeland as a result of their political or religious views. In my mind, it is clear that the McAllisters are the kind of people who meet the criteria for political asylum and the U.S. should grant it to them."

On a separate front, Rothman, King, and 23 of their House colleagues sent a letter today to U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, who has jurisdiction over the McAllisters' fate, asking him to suspend the deportation of the McAllister family. For months, Rothman has been leading the fight to allow Malachy McAllister along with his wife and children to stay in the United States instead of being forced to return to Northern Ireland where their lives would be in danger from armed loyalists.

"We are writing to ask for your intervention in the case of Malachy McAllister and his family. The McAllister family is seeking political asylum in the United States based on past persecution they have suffered and a fear that their lives will be in danger if they are returned to Northern Ireland," Rothman, King, and their 23 House colleagues wrote in a letter faxed to Ridge. "Following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, which ended the conflict in Northern Ireland and which the United States helped negotiate, the U.S. government suspended deportation proceedings for nine Irish nationals charged with offenses in Northern Ireland arising out of that conflict. We respectfully request that you suspend deportation proceedings for Malachy McAllister and his family."

Malachy McAllister and his family fled Northern Ireland following an armed loyalist attack on their home in October 1988, in which 26 shots were fired into their living room. These shots barely missed McAllister's children and mother-in-law. Fearing for their lives, McAllister and his family fled Northern Ireland and have been seeking asylum in the United States. Many believe that if forced to return to Northern Ireland they will once again be the targets of violence.

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