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Congressman's 'Secure Our Schools Act' Provides Grants To Schools For Metal Detectors, Safety Officers, Surveillance Cameras, & Other Deterrent Measures

Washington, DC - After receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback from students, parents, and teachers from across the country for his 'Secure Our Schools Act,' Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) today introduced legislation to expand the pilot school safety program into a much larger initiative in New Jersey and across the nation. In response to local concerns, Rothman originally authored the 'Secure Our Schools Act' in 2000 to provide federal grants to municipalities for school metal detectors, safety officers, surveillance cameras, and other deterrent measures. The legislation introduced today is needed to significantly broaden the program's reach and funding level.

"It is imperative that we do everything possible to ensure that our children are safe and protected from violence of any kind, especially while in school," said Rothman, who already has secured bipartisan support for his measure with 25 cosponsors. "The 'Secure Our Schools Act' provides schools with the federal funds they need to implement security measures that will allow students to focus on their studies without having to look over their shoulders worrying that someone may attack them."

Under the 'Secure Our Schools Act,' which is administered by the U.S. Department of Justice, municipalities can apply for funds to install metal detectors, locks, improved lighting, and other deterrent measures 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.

Over the past two years, Rothman has used his position on the powerful House Appropriations Committee to secure \$5 million annually for the program. Rothman expressed optimism that he can secure even greater levels of funding given the program's success thus far. The legislation introduced today would authorize the 'Secure Our Schools Act' for \$150 million over five more years.

"The issue of guns and acts of violence in our schools touches us all very deeply," said Rothman, who is the father of two school-aged children. "I am optimistic that given the across the board praise for the 'Secure Our Schools Act' over the past several years, that my colleagues in Congress will support this legislation to expand this school safety program so that many more students in New Jersey and across the nation can be protected from acts of violence in their schools."

In 2002, the 'Secure Our Schools Act' received its first-ever funding of \$5 million. As a result of Rothman's efforts, New Jersey received \$615,000 -- more than 12 percent of the total funds available across the nation. 'Secure Our Schools Act' grants were awarded in New Jersey to: North Bergen -- \$325,000; Union City - \$125,000; Asbury Park - \$50,000; Irvington - \$50,000; Orange - \$35,000; and Wildwood - \$30,000. While Rothman got an additional \$5 million approved for the 'Secure Our Schools Act' in 2003, those funds have not yet been allocated to specific municipalities.

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