

## Rothman Fights To Increase Funding For Organ Transplant Recipient Medicines Pushes For Legislation T

May 19, 2003

Rothman Fights To Increase Funding For  
Organ Transplant Recipient Medicines  
Pushes For Legislation That Would Expand Medicare Coverage For Post-Surgery Drugs

Trenton, NJ – In support of New Jersey Organ Donor Day, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) at the New Jersey Statehouse in Trenton today pressed his case for new federal legislation that would cover the cost of expensive, but necessary medicines for organ transplant recipients. Flanked by two kidney transplant recipients from Bergen County, Rothman said that Congress must pass the Medicare Fairness For Organ Transplant Recipients Act, of which he is a cosponsor, in order to relieve the financial burden of the life-saving medicines.

“It is imperative that those people who have survived long enough to receive a transplant, are able to get the very costly post-surgery medicines they need,” Rothman said. “It is unconscionable and unacceptable that any individual be denied the chance for a full recovery after a transplant because they cannot afford the drugs. The Medicare Fairness For Organ Transplant Recipients Act is an important first step toward addressing the astronomical drug expenses faced by patients following their transplants surgeries.”

Transplant recipients must take immunosuppressive drugs daily for the rest of their lives to prevent rejection of the new organ. These drugs can cost up to \$20,000 per year. The Medicare Fairness for Organ Transplant Recipients Act requires Medicare to cover immunosuppressive drugs for all organ transplant recipients once a patient becomes eligible for Medicare, regardless of when the transplant occurred. Currently, Medicare only covers the cost of these drugs if the patient was a Medicare beneficiary when the transplant occurred.

“There are nearly 80,000 Americans who are currently waiting for an organ transplant,” Rothman said. “Congress must pass legislation that will provide peace of mind and financial security to organ recipients so that they have one less major hurdle to face after they receive their transplant.”

Earlier this year, Rothman helped pass the Organ Donation Improvement Act, which will help educate the public about the importance of organ donation. It also authorizes grants to cover the costs of travel expenses for individuals who make living donations of their organs.

Rothman spoke at a press conference in the New Jersey Statehouse run by the New Jersey Organ and Tissue Sharing Network and State Senator Raymond Lesniak to draw attention to the needs and challenges of organ transplant recipients as well as those waiting for a donor.

Pictured above from left to right are: (Back Row) Joe Roth President of NJ Organ and Tissue Donation Services, Congressman Steve Rothman, State Senator Nick Sacco, and Walter Carnero, transplant recipient - Union City. (First Row) Charlie Kisting, transplant recipient - Lodi, and Ben Chirls, transplant recipient - Fort Lee.

###

[Go back](#)

