

Rothman Addresses Third Annual Conference On Dominican Affairs

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Remarks of Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9)
Third Annual Conference On Dominican Affairs
Seton Hall University - South Orange, New Jersey

“Monsignor Sheeran, Senator Corzine, Congressman Menendez, all of my other fellow elected officials, Executive Director Maria Teresa Feliciano, distinguished guests, and friends - good afternoon.

“Throughout its history, America has been a nation built by immigrants and we must never forget that. Today, as we strive to ensure equal opportunities in education and employment for all Americans - including our newest members - we must realize that future generations will judge us on how well America treats our newest immigrants. As you remember from my telling you last year, all of my grandparents came to America as immigrants, none of them spoke English. And I too consider myself an immigrant to America - one who has only been here slightly longer than many of the people in this room, as well as those who are registering at the I-N-S offices today.

“While the United States continues to adapt to the post-September 11th world and the need to secure our borders, we must not give in to those who seek to shut the door of immigration to America entirely. We must recognize that our remarkable diversity is a strength, not a weakness, and that immigration continues to be a vital and important part of the success of the United States.

“We must treat our immigrants with respect and common sense policies that treat them fairly and compassionately. That is why we must extend Section 245(i), which allows eligible individuals to apply for legal residency in the United States without having to first return to their native country. As we work to strengthen our communities and families, it would be unfair to separate families for years as loved ones are forced to wait for the opportunity to reenter the United States.

“But once established in the United States, it is responsibility of the Dominican-American community to not only focus on the political situation in their native land, but also to focus on the political situation here in their adopted homeland. That includes active participation in the government and politics of the United States, and running for public office in the United States. As the population of immigrants grows in our communities, it is important that political participation within the Dominican-American community grow as well.

“In Congress, I am working on an economic stimulus bill, with my great brother Congressman Bob Menendez, that is real, immediate, and would jumpstart the economy and provide relief to laid off workers and states.

“It does not, as President Bush’s plan does, give billions in tax cuts to the richest one percent of Americans tax breaks that President Bush pays for by under-funding such programs as the “No Child Left Behind Act” and college aid programs.

“As we continue to address the needs of Dominicans and all Americans already in the United States, we cannot forget those who live in the Dominican Republic. I am pleased to say that U.S. aid to the Dominican Republic continues to grow over the years. Last year we provided more than \$19 million. We are finalizing details on the budget for this year, but I am hopeful that the Dominican Republic will receive close to \$24 million. And next year, we are fighting for over \$27 million.

“As a friend of the Dominican Republic and Dominicans in New Jersey and across America, I look forward to

continuing to fight for policies and programs that are so important to improving the opportunities and quality of life of the Dominican people here in America and in the Caribbean.

houseÃ¢â¬â“The partnership between the United States, the Dominican Republic, and Dominican-Americans in New Jersey is strong and vibrant. And I am committed to making them even stronger!

houseÃ¢â¬â“Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today. It has been a great privilege. I wish you and all your families peace, good health, happiness, and prosperity.

houseÃ¢â¬â“Thank you very much, my friends.Ã¢â¬â•
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