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Congressman gets \$615,000 for North Bergen, Asbury Park, Irvington, Orange, Union City, and Wildwood, Through His National Program to Protect Students

North Bergen, NJ - Following through on his promise to strengthen school safety in New Jersey and across the nation, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) today announced that six New Jersey municipalities will benefit from a total of \$615,000 in federal grants as part of the first-ever funding of the "Secure Our Schools Act" - a national program that he authored and got signed into law. Speaking at North Bergen High School, Rothman announced that the Township of North Bergen has been awarded a \$325,000 federal grant to purchase an array of equipment to bolster security on its premises, and that the remainder of the "Secure Our Schools Act" funds will be divided among Asbury Park, Irvington, Orange, Union City, and Wildwood.

"These first-ever federal grants from the "Secure Our Schools Act" may well prevent the tragedy of school violence from befalling the children of these at-risk New Jersey schools," said Rothman, the father of two school-aged children. "Schools should be a safe-haven for students. Also, with new security measures in place as a result of these "Secure Our Schools Act" funds, students will be able to concentrate more freely on their studies without having to look over their shoulders in fear of danger, and parents will be able to live more comfortably knowing that their children are safe in school."

As the recipient of the most "Secure Our Schools Act" funds in New Jersey, North Bergen plans to use its grant for the security training of personnel and students, as well as to purchase metal detectors, video cameras, along with new locks and lighting -- all of which are security components that schools are able to acquire with funds from the "Secure Our Schools Act." The "Secure Our Schools Act" is a voluntary, matching 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. Under the rules of the program, it is possible for some grant recipients to receive an exemption from this requirement. North Bergen plans to discuss that possibility with the U.S. Department of Justice, which administers the funds.

Rothman authored the "Secure Our Schools Act," got it passed in Congress, and had it signed into law in response to numerous concerns over school safety from students, parents, and teachers. Last year he worked across party lines as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, to secure \$5 million in what was Congress' first-ever funding of this national program. As the administrator of the "Secure Our Schools Act," the U.S. Department of Justice sought out particular municipalities based on prior requests from them for federal assistance to crack down on school crime.

"These funds represent the first phase in what will be an ongoing commitment to combating school violence here in New Jersey and throughout the country," said Rothman, who is seeking to expand the "Secure Our Schools Act" by funding it with \$30 million in 2003. "It is essential that we provide our schools with whatever tools they deem necessary to protect students, teachers, and faculty members from any kind of violence."

Overall, 27 states will share a total of \$5 million in "Secure Our Schools Act" funds available. In New Jersey, the remaining "Secure Our Schools Act" grants will be divided as follows based on the individual needs of these municipalities: Asbury Park -- \$50,000; Irvington -- \$50,000; Orange - \$35,000; Union City - \$125,000; and Wildwood - \$30,000.

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