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Congressman Cosponsored Far-Reaching Measure To Help Prevent Election Problems

Washington, DC - In an effort to help prevent a repeat of the election debacle of 2000, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) last night joined an overwhelming number of his House colleagues in passing the "Help America Vote Act of 2002" - an historic election reform bill that will establish new minimum standards to reform the nation's election system.

"The 2000 presidential election made it painfully clear that our election system was broken," said Rothman, who cosponsored the measure. "Congress has a moral and civil obligation to fix the system to restore America's confidence in our democratic process. Now, we have moved to make the first-ever federal investment in our country's election system so that Americans can be sure that a vote cast is a vote counted."

The "Help America Vote Act" authorizes unprecedented federal assistance - \$3.8 billion over three years - to help states improve and upgrade every aspect of their election systems. This funding will replace outdated voting equipment, train poll workers, educate voters, upgrade voter lists, and make polling places more accessible for the disabled. The measure also requires states to implement computerized statewide voter registration databases to ensure accurate voter lists.

Additionally, the measure requires states to set standards for counting ballots and defining what constitutes a vote as required in the 2000 U.S. Supreme Court case *Bush v. Gore*. In order to ensure the integrity of the election system, first-time voters who register by mail will be required to produce some form of identification, and states will be obligated to maintain accurate voter registration lists.

"The 'Help America Vote Act' will restore the public's confidence in the integrity of our election system and bring that system into the 21st century," Rothman said. "This measure will help prevent the problems we saw in the 2000 election when the votes of an estimated 2 million Americans went uncounted."

Following Senate approval of the "Help America Vote Act," which is expected soon, the measure will move to the White House where President Bush is expected to sign it into law.

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