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Congressman's program is first to solely address school violence and safety

Jersey City - In an effort to bolster school safety in New Jersey and across the country, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) today announced that he has secured \$5 million for his "Secure Our Schools Act" - the only national program to solely address school violence. Speaking at Jersey City Public School 27, Rothman described the initiative as a major component to ensuring the safety of all students.

"For the first-time in our nation's history we have funded a program that tackles the issues of school safety head-on," Rothman said. "Schools should be a safe-haven for our children where they go to learn without having to look over their shoulder fearing that they may be in danger. With a secure school environment, students will be able to focus better on their schoolwork, and parents will have the comfort of knowing that their children are safe."

Under the "Secure Our Schools Act", schools 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 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.

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Rothman secured the funds during this year's budget process. Last week, the House and Senate overwhelmingly approved the Commerce, Justice, State, and Judiciary Appropriations bill, which includes the "Secure Our Schools Act" funds. Rothman had worked for the last two years in Congress to get funding for his bill.

Rothman authored the "Secure Our Schools Act" last year in response to concerns over school safety from numerous school parents and school children. In one instance, Rothman received a letter from a class of middle school students in Saddle Brook asking for his help to ensure that all schools have the appropriate measures in place to keep students safe. Rothman worked across party lines to successfully secure broad bipartisan support for his measure.

"The issue of guns in our schools is one that touches us all very deeply and personally," said Rothman, the father of two school-aged children. "We need to take all of the necessary precautions to prevent another Columbine from ever happening again. These funds will allow individual schools to determine what security measures, if any, they need most to safeguard themselves against anything from guns and knives to even schoolyard fights."

The Commerce, Justice, State, and Judiciary Appropriations bill is one of 13 spending measures Congress is required to

pass each year. President Bush is expected to sign the measure into law in the coming days.

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