

House Overrides Bush Veto of Water Resources Development Act

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Contact: Kimberly Allen, (202) 226-8364; (202) 420-1524 [cell]

Rothman Helps Override Bush's Veto of Long-Overdue Flood Control Bill

Legislation increases authorized funding for the Hackensack Meadowlands to \$20 million.

(Washington, DC)—Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) helped the House of Representatives successfully override President Bush's veto of the bipartisan Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) on Tuesday. Rothman was among 361 Members (over 2/3rd majority) who voted against the President's obstinate objection to water infrastructure improvements across the country at the same time he seeks another \$189 billion for his failed policy in Iraq. WRDA invests in flood control, shoreline protection, and ecosystem restoration projects nationwide. Locally, once enacted, the bill will increase authorized funding for the Hackensack Meadowlands from \$5 million to \$20 million.

"It is critical that we preserve critical areas of open space such as the Meadowlands for this and future generations. Saving the undeveloped wetlands in the Meadowlands maintains an oasis of beauty and calm in one of the most densely populated and overdeveloped areas of the country. Those wetlands also act as a sponge in the event of flooding, helping minimize damage from storms," said Rothman. "The Water Resources Development Act includes scores of important undertakings such as the ongoing work in the Meadowlands."

WRDA authorizes \$23 billion over a 15-year period for water resource projects, including \$20 million for ongoing efforts by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to preserve undeveloped wetlands in the Hackensack Meadowlands. In 2004, Rothman helped ensure that a "green" line was drawn around the 8,400 acres of undeveloped land in the Meadowlands, preventing further development. However, longer-term work by the Corps of Engineers is needed to remove pollutants from the Hackensack River, clean-up toxic sites in the surrounding land, enable healthy plant and animal-life to flourish, and transform the Meadowlands into an environmental park.

Other Corps of Engineers projects authorized by WRDA seek to minimize flooding that could destroy people's lives and livelihoods, improve channels like the Port of New York and New Jersey for commerce, and enhance the quality of life and health of people living near polluted waterways. In New Jersey, that includes dredging the Port of New York/New Jersey and Delaware River, flood management along the Passaic River, and ecosystem restoration and water quality improvements in Lower Cape May Meadows and on the Raritan River, as well as Rothman's Meadowlands project.

The Water Resources Development Act is intended to be authorized every two years, but the previously Republican-led Congress failed to complete a water resources bill for six years. President Bush claims WRDA is too expensive, but it addresses a backlog of water infrastructure needs over a number of years.

Rothman is a member of the House Appropriations Committee, which has sole responsibility for drafting U.S. spending bills. He supports increased funding for water resource projects each year and is working with the Corps of Engineers to make flood control along the Lower Saddle River a priority for the Corps.

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