

Rep. Rothman Re-Introduces Bill to Grant Permanent Legal Status to McCallister Family Seeking Political Asylum

For Immediate Release

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-Rothman Leads Bipartisan Congressional Coalition with Rep. King to Suspend Deportation Proceedings Against Irish Catholic Family-

WASHINGTON, DC - Continuing his efforts to help gain political asylum for an Irish Catholic family currently living in Wallington, New Jersey, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) today held a briefing and re-introduced legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives that would allow Malachy McAllister and his two youngest children, Nicola and Sean to stay indefinitely in the United States. The asylum case is currently scheduled to be heard before the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals sitting in Newark, NJ on July 1, 2005. If the appeal does not succeed, they will be forced to return to Northern Ireland where their lives would be in danger from British loyalists.

"The McAllister family came to America seeking refuge from persecution and violence they suffered because of their religion in Northern Ireland. This legislation provides Malachy and his two children with an opportunity to have a permanent home in America, which they deserve," Rothman said. "They pose no threat to our country and Malachy simply wants the chance to raise his children safe from harm, as do so many other immigrants who arrive in our country each and every day. It has been more than one year since the passing of Bernadette McAllister, Malachy's wife and the mother of their four children, so with each passing day, it becomes more imperative that action be taken immediately to resolve this case and achieve Malachy and Bernadette's dream of permanent safety for their family."

Congressman Rothman also is leading a bipartisan congressional coalition with Congressman Peter King (R-NY3) to keep the family in the United States. With the July 1st hearing before the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals date rapidly approaching, Rothman and King are collecting their colleagues' signatures for a letter that calls on U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff to suspend the deportation of the McAllister family.

"We are writing to ask for your intervention in the case of Malachy McAllister and his children, Nicola and Sean. The McAllister family is seeking political asylum in the United States based on past persecution they have suffered and a fear that their lives will be in danger if they are returned to Northern Ireland," Rothman and King wrote in the letter that will be sent to Chertoff on June 17, 2005. "Following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, which ended the conflict in Northern Ireland and which the United States helped negotiate, the U.S. government suspended deportation proceedings for nine Irish nationals charged with offenses in Northern Ireland arising out of that conflict. We respectfully request that you suspend deportation proceedings for Malachy, Nicola, and Sean McAllister."

Rothman's bill, which was first introduced on July 27, 2004 during the last Congress, would grant permanent legal status to Malachy and his two youngest children in order to allow them to continue to live in the United States, legally work here, and be protected by all U.S. laws. The two older children are pursuing independent efforts to gain permanent status in this country. In December 2003, Rothman got U.S. Homeland Security officials to release Malachy McAllister and his son, Jamie, from mandatory detention so that they could continue to work and remain free while the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals was considering a temporary stay of removal. Additionally, Rothman got U.S. Homeland Security officials to grant Bernadette, Malchys late wife who passed away last year from cancer, and their three children a 30 day extension to remain in the United States through Christmas when they were faced with a voluntary departure deadline of December 17, 2003.

Malachy McAllister and his family fled Northern Ireland following an armed Loyalist attack on their home in October 1988, in which 26 shots were fired into their living room. These shots barely missed McAllister's children and mother-in-law. Fearing for their lives, McAllister and his family fled Northern Ireland and have been seeking asylum in the United States since 1996. Many believe that if forced to return to Northern Ireland the McAllister family will once again be the target of violence.

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Pictured: (L-R) Congressman Steve Rothman and Malachy McAllister