

Rothman at Hearing: Congress Must Stop Illegal Gun Trafficking Into New Jersey

For Immediate Release: April 16, 2008

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

Stopping Gun Violence: Rothman Says Congress Must Stop Illegal Gun Trafficking Into New Jersey

Rothman Points to New ATF Field Office in Newark as Boost to Local Law Enforcement

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(Washington, DC)-On Tuesday, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) and his colleagues on the Congressional Task Force on Illegal Guns discussed how to stop illegal gun trafficking at a hearing on Capitol Hill. During the public forum, which featured four witnesses who had been directly involved in illegal gun purchases and sales, Rothman spoke about the importance of helping law enforcement stop the illegal flow of guns to violent criminals. In New Jersey, these efforts recently received a major boost with the opening of a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) Field Division in Newark on April 4th.

"According to ATF trace data on guns used in crimes that were recovered in New Jersey in 2006, 74% of New Jersey's crime guns come from out of the state-a rate higher than that of any other state," said Rothman. "To fight this alarming problem, which is a matter of life and death for New Jersey residents, I worked with the ATF and New Jersey Mayors, as well as Senator Frank Lautenberg and Congressman Donald Payne, to bring an ATF Field Division to our state to stem

the tide of violent crime. Finally, after 7 years of blood, sweat, and tears, New Jersey got its very first field division in Newark."

This ATF Field Division will be staffed by 40 federal agents and law enforcement personnel who will find, prosecute, and stop the gun runners who arm New Jersey's gang members and violent criminals who hold our streets and cities hostage. [Release about the new ATF Field Division.]

Enforcing the Laws on the Books

However, "we must do more to help our local law enforcement on the ground so that police can prevent the flow of guns to criminals, those with mental illnesses, and children," said Rothman. He appealed to his Republican and Democratic colleagues at the hearing to "fix provisions such as the Tiahrt Amendment, which ties the hands of local officers."

The Tiahrt Amendment, sponsored by Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-KS), is an anti-police measure that has been successfully attached to spending bills over the years that restricts local law enforcement's access to ATF data on guns used in crimes. This restricted data-which had been freely available until 2003-would help law enforcement locate 'hot spots' for illegal gun purchases and build cases against those helping supply criminals with firearms.

Last year, members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, including Congressman Rothman and Senator Lautenberg, successfully repealed parts of the Tiahrt Amendment, such as the restriction on local law enforcement from accessing data on crime guns outside their jurisdiction. They also made aggregate trace data publicly available again. Still, Rothman, Lautenberg, and law enforcement advocacy groups such as Mayors Against Illegal Guns continue to push for full repeal of the Tiahrt Amendment, which continues to restrict cities' access to and use of ATF data on guns used in crimes.

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