

Congressman Rothman Joined by N.J. Legislative Latino Caucus in Call for Justice for the People of Vieques, Puerto Rico

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On May 17, 2010, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ), a member of the Science and Technology Committee and Appropriations Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, was joined by N.J. State Assemblywoman Nellie Pou, Chair of the New Jersey Legislative Latino Caucus; N.J. State Assemblyman Angel Fuentes; N.J. State Assemblywoman Annette Quijano; and Javier Cuebas, Adviser to the Mayor of Vieques, at a press conference outside the Congressman's office in Hackensack, NJ to call for justice for the people of Vieques, Puerto Rico.

"The U.S. government must address the serious and disabling health care problems affecting the people of Vieques. These health issues were caused by more than 62 years of the U.S. bombing that island with military ordinance, which, our own government has acknowledged, created a federal superfund site that contains dozens of extremely dangerous, toxic and harmful poisons," said Congressman Rothman.

"The injustice toward the people of Vieques, Puerto Rico must end. Vieques is a small island off the south east coast of Puerto Rico that was used as a bombing range by the U.S. Navy from World War II until 2003. The munitions used in and around Vieques contained toxins that have negatively affected the health of the residents," said Congressman Rothman. "Yet in 2003, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) issued a report that said that the levels posed no health risk. The conclusions in this report strain credibility, are inconsistent, and demand a thorough reexamination."

"We must bring the issues surrounding the health of Vieques to light. I am confident we will finally be able to bring justice to Vieques. The time for the U.S. government to right this wrong is long overdue," said Congressman Rothman.

In response to Congressman Rothman's urging, ATSDR has now begun an independent reexamination of their 2003 conclusions and have stated that they will issue their initial findings by the end of the summer or early fall 2010.

From left to right: N.J. State Assemblyman Angel Fuentes, N.J. State Assemblywoman Annette Quijano, Congressman Steve Rothman, and N.J. State Assemblywoman Nellie Pou.

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