

Rothman Acts to Bring New Jersey More Cops, Safer Schools

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(Washington, DC)—During National Police Week (May 13-19, 2007), Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) is supporting legislation (H.R.1700) to put 50,000 more police officers on our nation's streets by restoring the successful Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) hiring grants program. He will also re-introduce an even broader version of the School Security Enhancements Act of 2007, which has been revised to require institutions of higher education to develop an annual campus safety response plan, as well as expand his Secure Our Schools initiative.

"The federal government has a responsibility to help states and localities put more cops on the streets and better protect schoolchildren from crime. I proudly voted to reauthorize the COPS office to hire more police officers nationwide and potentially put hundreds more police officers on the beat in the 37 towns that I represent. While this program will help schools hire resource officers, I also urge Congress to pass the School Security Enhancements Act so that schools can get help paying for other crime prevention measures, such as locks, metal detectors, and better lighting," said Rothman.

The COPS Improvement Act passed the House of Representatives on Tuesday, May 15th by a vote of 381 to 34. This bill authorizes \$600 million per year for hiring grants, which can be used to hire additional officers to engage in community policing, serve as School Resource Officers, or engage in counter-terrorism duties. It also allows for \$200 million per year to hire community prosecutors and \$350 million for technology grants to get officers out from behind a desk and on the streets. For example, these grants would allow local agencies to purchase lap top computers, patrol cars, crime mapping software, and interoperable communications equipment.

The COPS hiring grants program was created under the Clinton Administration in 1994 and helped local law enforcement agencies hire 117,000 additional police officers from 1995 to 2005, over 4,790 of them in New Jersey. The program is largely credited with reducing crime across the country.

However, over the last few years, the Republican-led Congress and President Bush sharply reduced funding for COPS hiring grants—reducing funding from more than \$1 billion a year in the late 1990s to nothing in 2006. Now, multiple reports have shown a nationwide increase in crime for the first time since the early 1990s.

Once the COPS Improvement Act is authorized, the next step is for Congress to appropriate funding for it. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, which makes decisions about all federal spending, Rep. Rothman is a long-time advocate of full funding for COPS hiring grants, as well as his Secure Our Schools program.

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