

Congressman Rothman Applauds Department of Justice for Investigating Death of Trayvon Martin

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 23, 2012

CONTACT: Aaron Keyak

office: (202) 225-5061

cell: (202) 905-6361

email: aaron.keyak@mail.house.gov

Washington, DC – On March 21, 2012, Congressman Steve Rothman (NJ-9) wrote a letter to US Attorney General Eric Holder, applauding his decision to have the Department of Justice investigate the killing of Trayvon Martin on February 26, 2012.

“I strongly support your decision that the Department of Justice investigates this matter…. I urge you to dedicate the resources necessary to conduct a thorough and speedy review of all evidence and the ensuing local law enforcement investigation and take appropriate action,” Congressman Rothman wrote to Attorney General Holder. “As a supporter and advocate for federal hate crimes statues, I encourage the Justice Department to investigate, if it is appropriate, this matter as a hate crime.”

The text of the letter:

March 21, 2012

The Honorable Eric Holder

Attorney General of the United States

950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 5111

Washington, DC 20530

RE: Trayvon Martin Case

Dear Attorney General Holder:

I am writing concerning the tragic killing of Trayvon Martin on February 26, 2012 in Sanford, Florida. I strongly support your decision that the Department of Justice investigates this matter. Considering the disturbing nature of the allegations and the horrible signal this act sends to African Americans about their safety, I urge you to dedicate the resources necessary to conduct a thorough and speedy review of all evidence and the ensuing local law enforcement investigation and take appropriate action.

As you know, Trayvon Martin, a 17 year-old, un-armed African American boy, was shot and killed while walking home from a local 7-Eleven. Trayvon was found with \$22, skittles and a can of iced tea in his possession. The gunman, a volunteer neighborhood watch member named George Zimmerman, admitted to killing Trayvon, but claimed he was acting in self-defense. Zimmerman, a 28-year-old man who was charged in July 2005 with resisting arrest with violence and battery on an officer, was not taken in for questioning or even tested to see if alcohol or drugs were in his system, which could have impaired his judgment. Today, over three weeks after Trayvon's tragic death, Zimmerman remains free.

Like many of my constituents and citizens across the nation, I am outraged by the way Trayvon's case has been handled by the Sanford Police Department in Florida. It is apparent that those charged with protecting the citizens of Sanford have neglected their duty, and justice for this young, innocent boy has yet to be pursued by local authorities. I urge the Department of Justice to remain committed to thoroughly investigating the shooting death of Trayvon Martin so that justice is granted to him, his loved-ones, the community of Sanford, and our nation.

As a supporter and advocate for federal hate crimes statues, I encourage the Justice Department to investigate, if it is appropriate, this matter as a hate crime. In a 9-1-1 call prior to the shooting, Trayvon was profiled as "suspicious" by the shooter. This tragic case challenges the fairness and integrity of our nation's

legal system and if the racial aspect of the case is not investigated properly, we would be ignoring the law.

In addition, Florida was the first among 21 states to pass a so-called "Stand Your Ground Law," which gives people wide latitude to use deadly force rather than retreat during a confrontation or fight. According to local authorities, the self-defense law is the reason why Mr. Zimmerman has not been arrested for his actions. The Florida law grants police on the scene the discretion to determine whether or not they believe the self-defense claim. In many cases, the officers make an arrest and leave it to the courts to conclude whether deadly force is justified. In this case, however, law enforcement officials have said they are confident that they did the right thing by not charging George Zimmerman. I urge the Department to investigate the apparent role this state law may have played in the failure to arrest the individual who admits to shooting Trayvon.

As a nation we cannot rest until the facts are obtained and appropriate actions are taken by our legal system. This young man, who had no criminal record and was described by his teachers and friends as cheerful and smart, has been taken from his family and loved-ones much too soon. The case of Trayvon Martin is a direct assault on the character and core ideals which make our nation great and raises disturbing questions about guaranteeing the personal safety of all Americans. As leaders of this nation, we must always ensure the application of equal protection and equal enforcement of the law. I would not be performing my duty as an elected official if I did not see to it that justice for Trayvon Martin is achieved and make certain that cases like his are never handled in the same manner again.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Steven R. Rothman

Member of Congress

###

