

# Introducing the School Safety Enhancements Act of 2007

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## Rep. Rothman Introduces the School Safety Enhancements Act of 2007

Bill expands Rothman's successful Secure Our Schools program; Sen. Boxer authors the Senate companion with support from Sen. Lautenberg

(Washington, DC)—Today, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) and Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) introduced the School Safety Enhancements Act of 2007, which expands Rep. Rothman's successful Secure Our Schools initiative. Secure Our Schools is a federal matching grant project to help local governments afford security equipment and training in their schools.

"One of government's top priorities is ensuring the safety of all our schoolchildren. While much progress has been made to protect our students and create a safe learning environment, much more can be done. I look forward to creating an even bigger and better Secure Our Schools program with this bill and am grateful to Senators Boxer and Frank Lautenberg for their leadership in the Senate," said Rothman. "Unlike the previous Republican-led Congress, I am hopeful that the new Democratic Majority will more adequately fund school safety."

Currently, local school districts can use Secure Our Schools grants for crime prevention measures, such as locks, lighting, and metal detectors, as well as security assessments, training for students, teachers, and administrators, and coordination with local law enforcement.

The School Safety Enhancements Act would add to the list of acceptable uses for a Secure Our Schools grant, most notably to allow schools to develop a telephone hotline that students can call to report tips. The legislation would also increase the amount of funding allowed for school safety grants to \$50 million annually, and increase the federal share of security improvements from 50% to 80% to take more of the burden off of local governments.

Since its first year of funding in 2002, \$50 million dollars has been distributed to 48 states under the Secure Our Schools program, helping an estimated 1,300 schools nationwide. Over \$6 million has helped secure 160 schools in New Jersey alone.

"Our children deserve to go to schools where they can learn and grow without fear of violence, and where their parents can have peace of mind that they are safe. This legislation will help provide our schools and our law enforcement communities with the tools and resources they need to create safe learning environments for our children," said Boxer.

"I applaud Senator Boxer for spearheading the School Safety Enhancements Act of 2007 in the Senate and I thank Senators Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Ken Salazar (D-CO), and Charles Schumer (D-NY) for their promised support," added Rothman.

While the progress made by Secure Our Schools is noteworthy, Rep. Rothman believes that much more must be done. The Boxer-Rothman bill would amend the Secure Our Schools program to:

Increase the federal share of school security upgrades to 80% and lower the local responsibility to 20%. This improvement ensures that even cash-strapped localities can afford to protect their children from the dangers of our society without raising property taxes. Currently, Secure Our Schools grants cover 50% of the cost and municipalities cover the other half.

Allow schools to use their grants to create a safety hotline. Students and others can call this telephone line to report dangerous situations. These hotlines have proven effective, most notably in Colorado school districts under the leadership of then-Attorney General Ken Salazar. Now a Senator, Salazar is a lead co-sponsor of the Boxer-Rothman school safety act.

Authorize \$50 million annually for Secure Our Schools grants. Currently, the program can receive up to \$30 million. Once this bill becomes law, Rep. Rothman can encourage his colleagues on the House Appropriations Committee, which makes decisions about all federal spending, to vastly increase funding for school security up to \$50 million.