

Rothman Receives Award For Efforts To Help Polio Survivors: Successfully Fought to Secure Social Security

September 9, 2002

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Successfully fought to secure Social Security benefits for those with post-polio condition

Englewood, NJ - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) today received the David Bodian Memorial Award from the International Post-Polio Task Force in a ceremony at Englewood Hospital and Medical Center in honor of his efforts to secure Social Security disability benefits for polio survivors with a post-virus condition known as Post-Polio Sequelae (PPS).

“I am humbled and honored to receive the David Bodian Memorial Award, which I accept on behalf of all those who struggle with PPS each day,” Rothman said. “Until last year, Social Security officials often denied PPS victims of the disability benefits due to a lack of knowledge about the condition, wrongly forcing those polio survivors to manage without the financial assistance they deserve.”

Rothman was honored for his four-year effort to ensure that eligible polio survivors receive Social Security disability benefits that they were promised under Social Security guidelines. In 1998, Dr. Richard Bruno, a PPS expert and chairperson of the International Post-Polio Task Force, alerted Rothman to the fact that many PPS victims were often being denied benefits due to a lack of information and training on the part of Social Security officials who determine which people qualify for benefits.

Over the next three years, Rothman repeatedly appealed to top-level Social Security officials, asking for a review of denials, an update in guidelines to include the latest research on PPS, and for local Social Security officials to be educated about and required to follow established guidelines. In March 2001, the Social Security Commissioner agreed to all of Rothman’s requests, fulfilling the promise of Social Security benefits for polio survivors.

“The Social Security Administration is getting it right, after a long time of getting it wrong,” Rothman said. “This was most definitely a fight worth fighting and I will continue to do whatever I can to ensure that polio survivors with PPS are treated fairly, justly, and with respect by the federal government.”

PPS occurs 35 years after the initial poliovirus attack in 75 percent of paralytic and 40 percent of non-paralytic polio survivors. It causes overwhelming fatigue, severe muscle weakness, and chronic pain. Although PPS has been studied

extensively during the past 20 years, many physicians and polio survivors are unaware of its existence.

The Bodian Award, which was presented to Rothman by Dr. Bruno, is named after Dr. David Bodian whose research in the 1940's explained how the polio virus damaged the body and set the stage for PPS. According to Bruno, Bodian is considered an unsung hero of PPS and also worked closely with Dr. Jonas Salk to help him develop the first polio vaccine.

Former Senator Bill Bradley, actress Mia Farrow, and actor David Morse are among others who will receive the Bodian Award later this month.

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