

Rothman Encourages President to Protect Funding for School Safety Programs

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Cites Palisades Park Student's Letter at Capitol Press Conference

Washington, DC -- Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) joined colleagues on May 10 to encourage President Bush to protect funding for school safety programs, citing a letter sent to his office by a Palisades Park student. Additionally, Rothman asked the Administration to fund a new program that would be devoted entirely to school safety, the Secure Our Schools Act.

"Not only has the Bush Administration cut existing programs that curb school violence, it has also failed to fund a new program I authored last Congress, the Secure Our Schools Act," Rothman said. "We cannot stand idly by while some troubled students bring bombs and guns into America's classrooms. We need to give local school districts the ability to protect our children from violence."

Rothman cited a letter which was sent to his office by 14-year-old Palisades Park student Andrea Katz. She wrote to ask for sensible gun control and school safety.

"Some would think that being a 14-year-old eighth grader is all about trying to make it through adolescence, while still reeling in one's carefree youth. Well, it is not. The times have changed and anyone who does think that, has a lot to learn about the future generation of this country. The object of this letter is to express the fear, that American children are forced to deal with daily," Katz wrote.

The Secure Our Schools Act is authorized to give \$90 million in funding for school security grants over the next three years. The security measures are not mandated by the federal government on local schools, instead if local school boards choose to, they can receive federal funds for locally selected security measures. It is the first federal program designed solely to address the issue of school security.

Rothman introduced the Secure Our Schools Act in April, 2000 while meeting with students at an anti-violence rally in Fort Lee (NJ) High School. The measure unanimously passed by the House Judiciary Committee and later passed as part of the Violence Against Women Act a few weeks later, which passed Congress in October, 2000 and was then signed into law by President Clinton.

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