



Congressman Steve ROTHMAN

Working For You!

March, 2002

Protecting America and Working On Our Nation's Other Priorities

Dear Friend,

As we approach the six month anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks, the wounds are still raw and very painful. At the same time, we stand united as Americans determined to seek justice against all those responsible and to protect ourselves from future attacks.

I strongly support President Bush's leadership in the war on terrorism, and strongly agree with his decision to increase the amount of money America spends on our military and on homeland defense.

However, while we continue our war against terror, we must also remember our other needs here at home. There are many problems in America that have to be addressed, and I look forward to working on your behalf to accomplish them in this Congress.

The Economy

With the country already in recession, the events of September 11th only made our economy worse. Our weakened economy has taken a tremendous toll on New Jersey's workers and businesses. We must help unemployed workers and small businesses to get back on their feet and to restore the strength of our economy to the record levels of growth we saw in the 1990's. Additionally, we should look to provide meaningful tax relief to middle-class people, and those creating new jobs, not simply huge wind-falls to every one of America's richest individuals and corporations. At the same time, we must keep the pledge we made to our seniors and not dip into the Social Security or Medicare trust funds.

Education

I was very pleased to support the bipartisan education reform bill that Congress recently approved with overwhelming support. The measure will help our children receive the 21st Century education that they deserve, by providing schools with increased resources and flexibility in exchange for student and teacher accountability. Hopefully, that same spirit of bipartisanship that surrounded the education reform bill will carry over into other domestic issues. We must now, once and for all, pass legislation to help local school districts repair old schools and build new ones where needed, so that local property taxpayers are not saddled with the entire cost.

Prescription Drugs

Plain and simple, the costs of prescription drugs are too high for our senior citizens. An estimated one-third of all seniors, 13 million older Americans, lack prescription drug coverage that is critical to affording life-sustaining medicines. Those fortunate enough to have coverage also face always-rising costs. We must help all the seniors of today and tomorrow by providing volun-

tary prescription drug coverage under Medicare. I am hopeful that Congress will act this year to relieve the countless number of seniors who are forced to choose between paying for food and rent or paying for medicine.

Patients' Bill of Rights

It is essential that we guarantee the protection of all patients enrolled in managed care plans. In this new age of Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's), it is important that we return the power of decision making to doctors and their patients from insurance company accountants. We need laws that will protect the doctor-patient relationship and guarantee access, choice, and quality health care for all Americans. Last year, the Senate passed a meaningful, bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights, and I am optimistic that the House will follow suit later this year and pass similar legislation.

I am hopeful that Congress will mirror the unity of the American people and come together in a bipartisan fashion to pass these important pieces of legislation.

It is a privilege and high honor to serve and represent you in Washington, DC during this Congress. As always, should you need assistance of any kind, please do not hesitate to contact me at either my Hackensack, Jersey City, or Washington offices. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Washington - Steve, alongside families of September 11th victims and members of the New Jersey Congressional Delegation, urges Congress to pass tax relief for the families.

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Tax Changes for 2002

Steve continues to believe that we must provide hard working Americans with the opportunity to invest in their future. Last year he fought in Congress to ensure that working and middle-class singles and families, have more chances to put money away for tomorrow.

“One key to economic security tomorrow, is saving for tomorrow,” he said. “By giving Americans greater opportunities to prepare for the years ahead, we are providing them with the resources and peace of mind to prepare for their own futures.”

Here are some of the tax changes that Steve helped put into effect starting at the beginning of this year:

1. Individual Retirement Account (IRA) contribution limits rise from \$2,000 to \$3,000 annually, for workers under the age of 50, and rise to \$3,500 for workers over 50. By 2008, the limits will be \$5,000 for younger workers and \$6,000 for workers aged 50 and over.
2. Individual 401(k) contribution limits rise from \$10,500 to \$11,000. That level will continue to rise, and in 2006, the limit will be \$15,000 for younger workers and \$20,000 for those 50 years or older.
3. Contribution limits for education investment plans for college tuition rise from \$500 to \$2,000 annually, per child.

Steve's Budget Priorities

Steve strongly applauds President Bush for the way in which he has led the United States in the aftermath of September 11th and the war on terrorism. He believes that government's first responsibility is to protect its people, and he fully agrees with many of the President's initiatives for increased military and homeland defense spending.



Steve visits Teaneck's Thomas Jefferson Middle School to discuss the need to preserve the after school funds that he secured and that President Bush wants to strip from the budget.

However, he thinks that while we spend more resources on defense and homeland security, we cannot afford to spend hundreds of billions of dollars to provide additional tax cuts to America's very richest individuals and corporations who have already enjoyed the greatest income gains of all Americans in the last decade -- and still meet our country's most important domestic priorities.

Instead, he believes that we should take those valuable resources to pay for a prescription drug benefit for seniors, school renovation and construction, road and rail improvements, environmental cleanup and preservation, and for preserving Social Security and Medicare to protect this and future generations of seniors.

Unfortunately, President Bush does not have the same budget priorities. For example, in order to pay for the nearly \$2 trillion in tax cuts that disproportionately benefit America's wealthiest, he has proposed cuts, among other ones, that directly affect local school children. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Steve secured \$150,000 for after school programs in Teaneck and Hackensack, that the President says we now can't afford.

“This is really a question of priorities,” Steve said. “Do we think it is important to provide a place to go for kids with no parent at home after school, to improve their academic skills and keep them out of trouble, or do we fund enormous tax cuts for the richest of the rich? I choose investing in our children.”



Steve talks with students regarding the recently approved education reform measure that he voted for.

Education Reform

Steve has always believed that the key to continuing America's prosperity in the future is ensuring that our children have an A+ education today. That is why he recently joined a broad, bipartisan group of his colleagues to vote for and pass landmark education reform that will dramatically change the federal government's role in New Jersey's and America's public schools.

“This bill makes education a national priority,” Rothman said. “In exchange for a significant increase in the federal investment in our public schools and added flexibility in how states can use those dollars, we demand real accountability and results.”

He recognizes that local school officials are the ones who can best determine the needs of their schools and how the increased federal funds would best be used to improve the education that their students receive. However, the education reform measure requires all 50 states to test their student and teacher progress against national benchmarks. The measure provides additional assistance to schools that fail to improve, and it ultimately calls for the restructuring of school policy, curriculum, and administration if the school shows no improvements over a span of several years.

In order to achieve the legislation's goal of having every student in the country proficient in reading and basic math at an early age, the measure also focuses on ensuring that every classroom in America has a qualified and knowledgeable teacher.

The legislation holds states and school districts accountable for ensuring that every teacher is qualified to teach in the subjects and grade levels to which they are assigned. In fact, it provides \$2.85 billion in the coming year for schools to bring in more qualified teachers — an increase of \$800 million over our previous commitment to this worthy goal.

“We would be cheating students of the quality education they deserve if we do not ensure that students have well-trained and well-paid teachers helping them,” Steve said.

Fixing Traffic Gridlock / Rebuilding PATH / Expanding Ferry Service

As the most densely populated region in the most densely populated state, North Jersey residents know far too well the trouble of traffic gridlock.

Using his position on the House Appropriations Committee, Steve brought home \$300,000 to conduct a study of how to ease the backed up traffic on the 1.9 mile stretch of Route 17 between Farview Avenue in Paramus and Essex Street in Hackensack -- where the four lane highway abruptly closes to two lanes.

"Everyone who has ever driven on Route 17 knows that two lanes are not sufficient to handle normal traffic, especially during rush-hour," Steve said.

Additionally, he secured \$1 million for drainage and safety improvements at Route 46 and Main Street in Lodi. Among the items that will be constructed there are detention basins and retaining walls to deal with the regular post-rainfall flooding of that area.

"As the thousands of Lodi residents and others who use that intersection know, nightmare traffic backups can occur regularly whenever heavy rains hit the area," he said.

Steve has also focused his efforts on mass transportation -- securing \$2.35 million to allow engineers to begin work on a series of light rail stations throughout Bergen County. Additionally, he helped secure \$141 million as part of the federal government's commitment to



Steve, who secured \$1 million to prevent flooding at the intersection of Route 46 and Main Street in Lodi, meets with construction workers to discuss the project.

complete the Hudson portion of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail System.

Also, as a result of the September 11th terrorist attacks, many New Jersey residents have begun to commute to their jobs in New York City via mass transit as a way of avoiding the long lines associated with the necessary security checkpoints at Hudson River crossings.

Along with the fact that there is now no PATH service to the World Trade Center area, New Jersey commuters have had to deal with overcrowded trains, buses, and ferries that have people feeling like they are sardines.

Steve was pleased to help secure \$100 million to help accelerate the restoration of PATH service to Lower Manhattan and to increase NJ Transit's capacity for passengers.

Finally, in order to provide short term and long term options for New Jersey commuters, he helped get a separate \$100 million to expand ferry service, adding more boats and departure points, for trans-

Hudson River commuters.

"These vital resources will deliver a big boost to our region's rebuilding process in the aftermath of one of the most horrific moments in our nation's history," he said. "Restored and expanded PATH and ferry services will allow New Jersey residents to commute to their jobs in New York City with greater ease, and at the same time help the region recover economically."

Suing Osama bin Laden

In an effort to ensure that Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda network pay for the crimes for which they are responsible, Steve has introduced a resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives urging the Justice Department to file a monetary lawsuit against bin Laden and his organization. Additionally, the resolution calls for President Bush to direct frozen assets from bin Laden and al Qaeda into the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund.

"While our armed forces are making Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda network pay for their September 11th acts of murder and terror, the Justice Department and the President should make them also bear the financial cost for the economic loss and pain and suffering they have inflicted on thousands of innocent families," said Steve, who noted that bin Laden alone is estimated to have a personal worth of \$200-\$300 million. "As America extends a helpful hand to the families who lost loved ones on September 11th, it is only appropriate that those who committed these evil acts forfeit their assets to pay the claims of the victims."

Steve expressed his hope that if the Justice Department anticipated that additional revenue would be collected through a lawsuit against bin Laden and al Qaeda, then it would reevaluate the amount it plans to award to victims' families. Currently, all families are set to receive a base payment of \$250,000 in pain and suffering compensation plus an additional \$50,000 for each surviving, immediate family dependent. Additional payments to compensate for the loss of income from the victims are based on a sliding scale determined by age and salary history.

"While no amount of money will ever compensate for the loss of a loved one, it is important that we provide these families with the financial support that will help them as much as possible. Someday we'll find Osama bin Laden and through this legislation, we could potentially provide even greater financial assistance to these innocent families at no expense to taxpayers."



Steve joined family members of the two Lodi police officers killed by Thomas Trantino, and officers from across New Jersey, at a press conference to protest the release of Trantino. He called the slain officers, Sgt. Peter Voto and Gary Tedesco, heroes and said that Trantino should have never been allowed to walk the streets again.

Sep. 11 - Victims Tax Relief

After months of lobbying to provide tax relief to the family members of September 11th victims, Steve was on hand at the White House to watch President Bush sign the Victims of Terrorism Tax Relief Act into law.

For surviving family members of September 11th victims, the measure waives income taxes for 2000 and 2001, provides a refund on any income taxes already paid during that period, and repeals a significant portion of the estate tax. Additionally, the measure makes life insurance payments and disability benefits for these families tax exempt, and eliminates the income tax on charitable gifts and contributions.

"All of these families lost a major, if not the only, source of income when their loved ones were murdered by terrorists," Steve said. They have bills, mortgages, and college tuition to pay just like the rest of us. This tax relief will provide them with some much needed financial assistance to help make their lives a little easier."

Under the measure, all families of the more than 3,100 victims killed in the attacks would receive tax relief, including 55 families in New Jersey's Ninth Congressional District.

Veterans Benefits

Steve recognizes the personal sacrifices our veterans and their families have made on behalf of our country and all of us, which is why he is always fighting for ways to provide our heroes with the benefits that they deserve.

Congress recently approved three measures which Steve supported that will help our veterans enjoy a better standard of living. The measures increase compensation payments for disabled veterans by \$2.5 billion, provide \$1 billion to help end chronic homelessness among veterans, and boost the Montgomery GI Bill college benefit by 51 percent.

“As our nation goes through one the most difficult times in its history, we draw strength, inspiration and hope from our heroic veterans who served this country with distinction and valor in previous

wars,” he said. “Our nation must live up to its obligation to provide our veterans and their families with the benefits that they were promised and deserve. These men and women risked their *lives* to defend America's freedom, democracy, and security.”



Steve regularly meets with veterans to inform them of the benefits that they have rightfully earned and are eligible to receive.

401(k)

Following the collapse of Enron, in which thousands of people lost their life savings, it is clear that we need to reform the way companies offer their employees 401(k) plans. These innocent people were locked into a 401(k) plan loaded with company stock and no way to get out of it.

Steve supports legislation that will bring flexibility and fairness to every 401(k) plan. He recognizes that if em-

ployees are locked into a plan, and the company collapses like Enron, then those employees lose their savings.

“401(k) plans are supposed to provide retirees with security, not insecurity,” he said. “We need to assure today’s workers that the money they are investing today will not suddenly disappear in the blink of an eye.”



Missing: Patricia Marie Viola

DOB: 18-aug-1958
 Missing: 13-feb-2001
 Race: White
 Sex: Female
 Height: 5'2"
 Weight: 125 lbs.
 Hair: Brown
 Eyes: Brown
 Missing From: Bogota, NJ
 If You Have Any Information, Please
 Call: (201) 487-2400

Mail Update

Due to the new mail screening procedures for Congressional office buildings, all US Postal Service mail is arriving slowly. Please continue to contact our Washington, DC office using phone, fax, or email. Thank you.

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Steve presents Olympic Gold Medalist Sarah Hughes, who trained at the Ice House in Hackensack, with a Congressional Certificate of Honor just prior to her trip to Salt Lake City where she shocked the world by winning the Women’s Figure Skating Gold Medal.

Coping With Sept. 11

**Bergen County
 Prosecutors' Office of
 Victim Witness Advocacy**
*Leading the effort to
 respond to September 11th*
 201-646-3535

**Bergen County Dept. of
 Human Services Alternatives
 to Domestic Violence**
 201-336-7575

**State of New Jersey Child
 Abuse Hotline Division
 of Youth and Family
 Services Child Abuse
 Hotline**

1-800-792-8610

Fighting For YOU!

* Protecting America and Working On Our Nation's Other Priorities

* Tax Changes to Help With IRAs, 401(k) Plans, and Education Savings Plans.

* Fixing Traffic Gridlock/ Rebuilding PATH/ Expanding Ferry Service

* Making Sure Veterans are Treated Fairly

A Progress Report From . . .

Congressman Steve Rothman