

Hauppauge, NY—On Tuesday, Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) and Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas J. Spota announced the House passage of \$200,000 in new funds for a unit within the District Attorney's office to target abuse to senior citizens. Israel and Spota were joined by a local victim of "elder abuse" who lost her home before intervention from the District Attorney's office. Elder abuse can involve physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect or abandonment and the confiscation or misuse of an elderly person's money or property.

"I hear from many seniors that have worked hard to reach retirement only to face predators that seek to undermine their financial, emotional and physical wellbeing," said Congressman Israel, a Member of the House Appropriations Committee that secured the funding. "While these seniors often feel embarrassed and isolated, unfortunately, they're not alone. That's why I fought to pass \$200,000 for Suffolk County to expand the services it offers to seniors victimized by elder abuse. Retirement should be a time to relax and enjoy the fruit of a lifetime of hard work, not time to defend it from con artists."

"Crimes victimizing the elderly require law enforcement to secure evidence under difficult circumstances, particularly when the victim's mental capacity is diminished," explained District Attorney Thomas J. Spota. "These funds will be used to meet those challenges and bring the criminals who target the senior citizens in our community to justice."

Israel fought to have the funds included in the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2008, which passed the House on July 26, 2007. They will be used to enhance elder abuse prosecutions through the creation of a specific Senior Abuse Unit. This will enable Suffolk County to hire additional prosecutors and investigators who would concentrate on investigating and prosecuting cases where senior citizens are abused, either financially or physically.

According to the best available estimates, between 1 and 2 million Americans age 65 or older have been subject to elder abuse. An October 2004 report estimated that elder abuse affects 2 to 10 percent of seniors.