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# This is why I support Josh Gottheimer | Opinion

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US Congressman Josh Gottheimer talks with Ed Forbes of the The Record's Editorial Board in Woodland Park, N.J. on Friday Oct. 14, 2022. *Tariq Zehawi/NorthJersey.com*

Last week, Rep. Josh Gottheimer came to The Colony cooperative in Fort Lee at the invitation of Moe Marshall, the president of the 1530 Owners Corporation. Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich and Councilwoman Ila Kosofsky introduced Gottheimer to an audience of over 150 Colony shareholders. I was one of those shareholders attending this fascinating question-and-answer session arranged by our board of directors.

The evening went by very fast and was far different than the typical candidate event. This is because Gottheimer brings to his constituents a very rich and substantive understanding of civic structure and community life, looking at the whole picture rather than a mere fragment. This made for a stimulating and engaging dialog with the congressman. Audience members, like myself, came away with a wealth of knowledge.



Rep. Josh Gottheimer speaks during a press conference to mark the completion of the ecological restoration project at the wild duck pond at Saddle River County Park in Ridgewood on Oct. 12, 2022. Mitsu Yasukawa/ Northjersey.com

In looking at the whole picture, Gottheimer has led the way on the environmental front, clawing back federal dollars for numerous clean water projects. He has likewise advanced New Jersey's transportation infrastructure, using federal dollars from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, which he helped shape and pass, to improve New Jersey's ports, roads, rails and bridges.

Perhaps most important, Gottheimer has demonstrated the same meticulousness and precision in advancing what I, as a sociologist, call the "human" infrastructure. This consists of our first responders — our fire fighters, police, and EMTs that are critical for keeping us safe. These dedicated men and women comprise the "human" infrastructure that is *sine qua non* to a healthy and productive society. They are most often invisible to us until we have an emergency and then need their life-saving intervention. Yet, their usefulness cannot be underestimated.

Gottheimer recognizes that perhaps better than anyone else. Last month he succeeded in getting the House of Representatives to pass his bicameral Invest to Protect Act, guaranteeing funding of police departments all over the country with the necessary funds for recruitment, retention, support and training. Included in that bill is the provision of essential mental health services for police officers to help them deal with the trauma and stress associated with their daily activities so as to prevent burnout, which is all too common for officers who haven't had proper intervention for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.



In taking a proactive step, Gottheimer wrote into his bipartisan Invest to Protect Act the designation of funds for proper training in domestic violence cases. This will make officers “responsive” and not “reactive” to an emergency call to a household where a dangerous fracas between partners has taken place. By prioritizing the “human” infrastructure, as evidenced in the manifold provisions of Gottheimer’s Invest to Protect Act, police can function at their best as “first responders” and not as “first reactors.” This is no doubt a major step in bolstering the “human” infrastructure for the betterment of all society.

Five years ago, Gottheimer realized another dream. He successfully helped put together the Problem Solvers Caucus, an independent member-driven group in Congress, comprised of representatives from across the country — equally divided between Democrats and Republicans — committed to finding common ground on many of the key issues facing the nation.

Serving as co-chair of this 58 member committee, Gottheimer was instrumental in providing COVID-19 emergency relief funds, rebuilding the arteries of transit from roads to airports, lowering pharmaceutical prices, delivering aid to children at the border, enacting criminal justice reform, ensuring gun and school safety measures, and promoting increased openness, bipartisanship, and transparency for bills with more than 290 sponsors, while cutting through the labyrinth of red tape to expedite committee markups for popular bipartisan amendments that should not be delayed with getting to the floor.

Gottheimer may, in fact, permanently put an end to “politics as usual.” By seeing the whole picture, as evidenced in his strides on the bipartisan front and in his fortification of the “human” infrastructure as equal — and just as crucial — to the environmental, transportation, and other key infrastructures, Josh has brought us into a new era of politics where bottlenecks and filibusters become relics of the past. He has invigorated and breathed new life into civics. For that alone I am so proud to be his constituent, and indeed grateful to The Colony board of directors for arranging the candidate forum last week.

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