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## **MIKULSKI, CARDIN ANNOUNCE CRITICAL FUNDING FOR MARYLAND'S HOMELAND SECURITY ASSETS**

WASHINGTON, DC – **Senators Benjamin L. Cardin and Barbara A. Mikulski** (both D-MD), today announced the fiscal year 2009 Homeland Security spending bill includes key funding for Maryland's security. The legislation addresses several high-priority items, including grants for firefighters, first responders, public transportation and rail security assistance, port security, and a major project for the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay in Baltimore. The legislation passed the Senate as part of the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act. The bill now heads to the President to be signed into law.

“Protecting America’s security begins at home and federal investments in grants like these strengthen our ability to protect our neighborhoods, our economic livelihood and our nation’s borders,” said **Senator Cardin**. “I am proud of the role Maryland, and the entire National Capital Region, has as a national and international hub for government, business, and tourism. But that spotlight inherently brings an increased risk that makes these funds much more critical.”

“This legislation gets us one step closer to keeping our nation safer, standing up for our first responders and making sure that if terror strikes, measures are in place to protect and save lives,” said **Senator Mikulski**, a senior member of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee. “I will keep fighting to make sure there are resources in the federal checkbook for our homeland security.”

### **FIREFIGHTER GRANTS**

The spending bill includes \$775 million in federal funding for our nation’s firefighters through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP). AFGP grants fund firefighting equipment, personal protection equipment, training, firefighting vehicles, firefighter/first responder safety projects, and staffing recruitment and retention. This includes \$565 million for Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) and \$210 million for Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants.

President Bush proposed to fund the AFGP at \$300 million for fiscal year 2009, down from \$750 million in fiscal year 2008 – a \$450 million cut. The spending bill provides a \$25 million increase for these grants. The President’s request also completely eliminated funding for SAFER grants for the third year in a row.

“First responders have always been on the front lines, keeping our families and our neighborhoods safe from harm. I recognize that first responders in the National Capital Region have a unique challenge: the local residents they protect include the Federal Government, which increases the inherent threat and expands their mission,” said **Senator Cardin**. “I believe these federal grants are critical investments that help ensure that Maryland’s first responders are prepared for any potential threat.”

“We must do better for our first responders. The federal government has a responsibility to protect our protectors, providing them with the best equipment, training and resources they need to do their job safer and smarter,” said **Senator Mikulski**, who teamed up with colleagues across the aisle in the House and Senate to create this program in 2000. “Helping our firefighters is not a political issue, it is a safety issue. If you are willing to put your life on the line every day, you should never feel short-changed by your government. I am so proud to announce this federal investment in the safety of our first responders.”

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION & RAIL SECURITY ASSISTANCE

The bill includes \$400 million in funding for transit and rail security grants, a \$225 million increase above the President’s request, to provide critical security enhancements for rail and bus systems. \$25 million in funding will go directly to Amtrak for security enhancements for intercity rail operations between key, high-risk urban areas throughout the United States.

“Our mass transit systems are highly visible targets that we rely on daily to efficiently move commuters and tourists, taking thousands of cars off our roads. Transit systems like Metro and MARC can be highly visible targets also can move thousands during emergency situations like evacuations. I believe it is imperative that we keep these critical systems functioning and safe, providing the federal resources to allow local and regional governments to deal with any potential threat,” said **Senator Cardin**.

“We are a high-risk, high-threat nation, with transit systems uniquely challenged to protect and perform. At a time when gas prices are sky high, when we are encouraging the use of rail and transit alternatives like MARC, Metrorail and regional buses, we need to make sure we are keeping commuters safe,” said **Senator Mikulski**. “I will keep fighting to make sure our critical transit systems have the resources they need in the federal checkbook to effectively deal with any potential threats.”

#### PORT SECURITY GRANTS

The bill also includes \$400 million in funding for the Port Security Grant Program, \$190 million above the President’s request. These funds are granted to ports across the country to finance

security enhancements to protect against terrorism. Approximately 11 million containers come into the United States each year, including 19,000 containers daily. Overall, the Port of Baltimore is ranked 12th nationally for total dollar value of cargo handled and 14th nationally for total foreign cargo handled. The Port of Baltimore received \$6.5 million in grant funding this year.

“The Port of Baltimore is one of the most important economic hubs for our state and region. Its close proximity to Washington, access to the Northeast corridor, and sheer volume make it a high-level target,” said **Senator Cardin**. “I believe these funds to improve port security are essential to our community and our economy.”

“Ports are high-threat targets for terrorism. We need to make sure the Port of Baltimore and all ports across America are safe, secure and growing,” said **Senator Mikulski**. “I have been fighting to upgrade the Port of Baltimore for more than 20 years – and for years my challenge was fixing the twists and turns in our channels that were a safety risk. Today, it’s threats that were unthinkable years ago. Keeping our ports and our people safe from terrorism is one of my top priorities.”

#### COAST GUARD YARD

This year’s spending bill also includes \$66.3 million for a maintenance and repair project at the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay. This will extend the service life and increase mission performance for the Coast Guard’s aging fleet of boats. The bill also includes language directing the Coast Guard to complete a workload report for the Yard. The report will outline the Coast Guard’s future workload and workforce plan for the Yard over the next six years. The Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, which has been in operation for over a century, is a critical component of the Coast Guard’s mission and directly supports fleet readiness.

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