

# APPROPRIATIONS ALERT

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## LABOR-HHS-EDUCATION/MILCON-VA APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT **THE BEGINNING OF THE ENDGAME** (H.R. 3043)

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Following a record delay, Democratic appropriators have at last scheduled a fiscal year 2008 conference report for consideration on the House floor. The measure combines two usually separate bills – appropriations for Labor-Health and Human Services-Education, and for Military Construction-Veterans Affairs – into a single “minibus” package with total discretionary budget authority [BA] of \$215 billion. The figure is \$21.2 billion more than 2007, and \$13.8 billion more than the President’s request (excluding advance appropriations).

The measure reflects the Majority’s intent to put politics ahead of serious budgeting: it outspends the President by a significant amount, and unnecessarily combines two unrelated bills to complicate an expected veto.

The fiscal year started 37 days ago. No previous Congress has delayed this long in sending at least one appropriations bill to the President. In the mean time, Federal agencies are operating under a continuing resolution [CR], H.J. Res. 52, that expires on 16 November 2007. A second CR is likely to extend well into December.

Key points about this first appropriations measure include the following:

- ***Starts the Appropriations Endgame.*** H.R. 3043 is the first in a series of appropriations bills aimed at confronting the President over spending limits. The President has warned repeatedly that he would veto any appropriations measures that cause total discretionary spending to exceed his request of \$933 billion for fiscal year 2008. The Majority has claimed their total appropriations are “only” \$21 billion above the President. But that figure gets permanently built into government spending, and *grows to \$204 billion by 2012.*
- ***Spends \$9.8 Billion More Than the President for Labor-HHS-Education.*** The Labor-HHS portion of the conference report exceeds the President’s 2008 budget request by \$9.8 billion in BA, in part funding this increase by siphoning roughly \$3.5 billion in funds from the Defense bill. To further avoid spending limits, the bill provides \$20.9 billion in advance appropriations – spending for years after fiscal year 2008 – \$2 billion more than 2007, and \$2.4 billion more than the President’s request.
- ***Holds Hostage Troop Funding and Veterans Health Care.*** The President has repeatedly asked Congress for a freestanding MilCon-VA bill, which includes funding for military

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bases and facilities, Base Realignment and Closure [BRAC], and veterans' hospitals and clinics. By needlessly tying MilCon-VA together with Labor-HHS, the Majority is holding the troops' and veterans' funding hostage to its demands for increases in domestic spending. In addition, the conference report underfunds the BRAC account by \$133.6 million.

- ***Contains 117 'Airdropped' Earmarks.*** The conference report contains 2,818 earmarks totaling approximately \$19.4 billion. Included in this figure are 117 *new* earmarks that were "airdropped" in conference – nine for Labor-HHS, and 108 for MilCon-VA. These airdrops, which total \$574 million, have never been subject to challenge on the House floor, and cannot be challenged under procedures for consideration of the conference report.