



COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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SUMMARY

THE SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS AND VETERANS' HEALTH CARE ACT

The Support Our Troops and Veterans' Health Care Act:

- Ensures that U.S. forces in the field have all of the resources they require;
- Directs more resources to the war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan;
- Improves healthcare for returning service members and veterans; and,
- Sets a timeline for ending U.S. participation in Iraq's civil war.

FUNDING FOR IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN, AND THE TROOPS

Afghanistan: Adds \$1 billion to the Defense Department request to address the rising conflict in Afghanistan and \$226.5 million to the request for State and USAID programs.

Defense Health Care: Includes \$2.8 billion for Defense Health Care, which is \$1.7 billion above the President's request. Additional funds support new initiatives to enhance medical services for active duty forces, mobilized personnel, and their family members. These include:

- \$450 million for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder/Counseling;
- \$450 million for Traumatic Brain Injury care and research;
- \$730 million to prevent health care fee increases for our troops;
- \$20 million to address the problems at Walter Reed; and,
- \$14.8 million for burn care.

As amended in Committee, the proposal prevents any funds from being used to close Walter Reed.

Veterans' Health Care: Adds \$1.7 billion to the request for veterans health care, including:

- \$550 million to address the maintenance backlog at VA health care facilities to prevent situations similar to those at Walter Reed;
- \$250 million for medical administration to ensure sufficient personnel to address the rising number of veterans and to maintain a high level of service;
- \$229 million for treating the growing number of veterans;
- \$100 million to allow the VA to contract with private mental healthcare providers to offer veterans, including Guard and reserve members, quality and timely care; and,
- \$62 million to speed claims processing for returning veterans.

Base Realignment and Closure: Includes \$3.1 billion to fully fund FY 2007 needs.

Basic Allowance for Housing: Increases the request by \$1.4 billion to eliminate the military housing shortfall.

Readiness: Provides \$2.5 billion in additional funding for the Strategic Reserve Readiness fund to ensure that our troops are properly equipped and trained.

Increasing the Size of the Military: Includes \$2.3 billion for the full cost of fielding an additional 36,000 Army troops and 9,000 Marines, and \$720 million for related military construction costs.

Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) Vehicles: Includes \$1.4 billion, \$311 million above the request.

Family Advocacy Program: Provides an additional \$17 million for domestic violence programs.

Protection for Aircraft: Adds \$198 million for air survivability equipment for the Marine Corps and \$706 million for infrared countermeasures for the Air Force (\$222 million above the request).

Equals the request for Iraq Security Forces (\$3.8 billion), Afghan Security Forces (\$5.9 billion), Joint IED Defeat Fund (\$2.4 billion), Working Capitol Funds (\$1.3 billion) and coalition partner support (\$650 million).

Does not fund two Joint Strike Fighters and five of six EA-18G electronic attack airplanes requested because they are unrelated to battle losses and considered not to be urgent. In addition, development programs that duplicate work at the Joint IED office are not funded.

PROTECTING THE TROOPS, DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENDING THE WAR

Supporting and Protecting Our Troops. In order to minimize the burdens on our troops and maximize their security, the proposal would direct the President to adhere to military guidelines for:

- **Unit Readiness.** Requires the Defense Department to abide by its current policy, requiring the chief of the military department concerned to determine that a unit is “fully mission capable” before it is deployed to Iraq. The President may waive this provision by submitting a report to Congress detailing why the unit’s deployment is in the interests of national security despite the assessment that the unit is not fully mission capable.
- **Length of Deployment.** Requires the Defense Department to abide by its current policy and avoid extending the deployment of units in Iraq in excess of 365 days for the Army and 210 days for the Marines. The President may waive this provision by submitting a report to Congress detailing the particular reason or reasons why the unit’s extended deployment is in the interests of national security.
- **Time Between Deployments.** Requires the Defense Department to abide by its current policy and avoid sending units back into Iraq before troops get the required “time out of the combat zone” and training time (365 days for the Army and 210 days for the Marines). The President may waive this provision by submitting a report to Congress detailing why the unit’s early redeployment to Iraq is in the interests of national security.

Meeting Benchmarks and Ending our Involvement in Iraq’s Civil War. The proposal would pressure the Iraqi leaders to improve their performance by establishing a timeline for ending U.S. participation in Iraq’s civil war.

- **Progressing Toward Political and Military Benchmarks.** By July 1, 2007, the President must certify that Iraq is making meaningful and substantial progress in meeting political and military benchmarks, including a militia disarmament program and a plan that equitably shares oil revenues among all Iraqis. *If the President does not provide this certification then U.S. forces must begin an immediate redeployment to be completed no later than December 2007 (180 days).*
- **Achieving Political and Military Benchmarks.** By October 1, 2007, the President must certify that Iraqis have achieved the political and military benchmarks. *If he does not provide this certification then U.S. forces must begin an immediate redeployment to be completed by March 2008 (180 days).*
- **Ending U.S. Participation in the War.** Should both certifications be provided, the Administration must begin *redeploying U.S. forces from Iraq by March 1, 2008 and complete the redeployment by August 2008 (180 days).*

No Permanent Bases: Prohibits the establishment of any permanent military installation or base of U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq.

Prohibiting Torture: Prohibits the use of funds for activities that contradict the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Security Forces: Limits the availability of funds in the “Iraq Security Forces Fund” and “Afghan Security Forces Fund” until the Secretary of Defense submits to Congress readiness assessments of Iraq and Afghan security forces and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget submits a report detailing the total cost of training and equipping these forces.

HOMELAND SECURITY

Aviation Security: Adds \$1.25 billion to the request, including \$1 billion for explosive detection systems at high priority airports, \$90 million to test and deploy advanced checkpoint explosive detection equipment and screening techniques, and \$160 million to increase air cargo screening on passenger aircraft.

Port, Transit and Border Security: Adds \$1.25 billion to the request, including \$400 million for ports of entry radiation detection, \$515 million for prevention and response capabilities at ports, transit systems, and in our states, and \$250 million for container and northern border security.

Department of Energy Nuclear Security: Provides \$83 million to accelerate the deployment of radiation detection equipment to scan shipping containers bound for the United States at high-priority international seaports, and \$67 million to secure nuclear material in the former Soviet Union.

GULF COAST RECOVERY

Army Corps: Includes \$1.3 billion to repair and complete flood and storm damage reduction projects in the greater New Orleans area and \$37 million for hurricane and coastal storm damage reduction projects in Mississippi.

FEMA Disaster Relief Fund: Adds \$910 million to the request to cover the cost of waiving Stafford Act state and local government matching fund requirements for some FEMA disaster assistance programs already provided in Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida and Texas.

Agriculture Disaster: Includes \$140 million for farmers and ranchers affected by the hurricanes.

Loan Forgiveness: Eliminates special rules that prohibit loan forgiveness for Katrina and Rita related Community Disaster Loans.

Continued Assistance: Extends FEMA's ability to pay utility costs through February 7, 2008; extends the availability of previously appropriated Title XX Social Services Block Grant funds through September 30, 2008; extends the Secretary of Education's authority to waive certain regulations for emergency assistance to reopen schools in hurricane-impacted school districts for another year; and extends the Disaster Voucher Program, which provides Section 8 vouchers to low-income residents who moved to other parts of the country, to December 31, 2007.

Additional Assistance: \$120 million for disaster relief for fishing industries on the Louisiana Gulf Coast, \$30 million for colleges and universities and \$30 million for schools most severely impacted by the hurricanes to help them recover to normal operations, and \$25.1 million to allow the Small Business Administration Disaster Loan Program to continue to make and service disaster loans to homeowners and businesses, including those affected by the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes.

CONTRACTING AND OVERSIGHT

Improving Contractor Oversight: The request for Defense Department operations and maintenance accounts are reduced by \$815 million to encourage the Department to better manage private contractors. Ten percent of the total appropriation for operations and maintenance is withheld until the Department provides Congress with a report detailing the numbers and types of contractors used in theater.

Penalizing Poor Contractor Performance: Prohibits the granting of award fees to any defense contractor whose performance does not meet the requirements of the contract.

Extending Authority of Iraq Inspector General: Extends the authority of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) to include funding appropriated in FY07, including the supplemental.

Minimizing Wasteful Private Contracts: Federal agencies are required to develop and implement plans to minimize the use of wasteful sole-source and cost-reimbursement contracts. These provisions apply to agencies spending more than \$1 billion on private contracts. In addition, agencies must provide Congress with documentation justifying the award of non-competitive contracts and quarterly reports on contractor costs exceeding \$1 million that are unjustified, unsupported, or unreasonable.

Improving FEMA Hurricane Relief Oversight: Adds \$4 million for the Inspector General at the Department of Homeland Security to increase oversight of rebuilding efforts in the Gulf Coast.

Improving HUD Hurricane Relief Oversight: Adds \$10 million for the HUD Office of the Inspector General to increase oversight of the expenditure of funds dedicated to hurricane recovery in the Gulf Coast.

Coast Guard Contracting: Requires independent technical reviews for major engineering changes to large contracts and requires the Coast Guard to submit an expenditure plan for Deepwater.

Department of Homeland Security Contracting: Prohibits financial conflicts of interest for contractors responsible for system integration.

OTHER ITEMS

Minimum Wage: Includes the increase to the minimum wage and related small business tax cuts passed by the House earlier this year.

Food Assistance (PL 480 Title II): \$450 million, \$100 million above the President's request, to support food aid in Sudan/Eastern Chad, Afghanistan, Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa.

Agricultural Assistance: Adds \$3.7 billion, largely for a scaled down agriculture disaster program that would only assist those farmers who have met their responsibility to purchase crop insurance. According to the National Farmers Union, over 80 percent of U.S. counties were designated as disaster areas in 2005 and 60 percent were declared in 2006, making this assistance essential if farmers are to maintain their livelihoods in the coming year.

County Payments: Adds \$400 million to continue funding for the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 until it can be reauthorized. Without this funding, schools throughout the Northwest would be denied promised compensation for lost revenue due to declines in timber and salmon harvests.

Wildfire Suppression: Adds \$500 million for wildfire suppression emergency reserve accounts because funds were depleted during the 2006 wildfire season (the most expensive on record). These funds are only available if all other wildfire suppression funds are expended and cost reduction practices are implemented.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program: Adds \$400 million to partially restore cuts to the program. Many states are running out of LIHEAP funds just as many utility shut-off moratoriums are set to expire.

Pandemic Flu Preparedness: Adds \$1 billion to purchase vaccines needed to protect us from a global pandemic. Development of production capacity for a pandemic vaccine must be accelerated so that manufacturers can quickly produce enough quantities to protect the population.

State Children's Health Insurance Program: As amended in Committee, the proposal adds \$750 million for SCHIP to ensure continued healthcare coverage for children in 14 states that face a budget shortfall in the program. Without prompt action now on the supplemental, states will be forced to stop enrolling new beneficiaries and begin curtailing benefits.

Foreign Aid: Security assistance is added for Liberia (\$40 million) and Jordan (\$100 million).

Chemical Security: Clarifies that the Department of Homeland Security cannot preempt more stringent State or local chemical security laws or regulations.