

**Transcript of Floor Statement by Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND)  
on Warner Amendment (#2742) to Increase Defense Spending  
in Senate Budget Committee-Reported FY 2005 Budget Resolution  
March 10, 2004**

I agree with Senator Warner we ought to increase the defense allocation to the request of the Commander in Chief when our troops are engaged in combat. I think that should be done.

I also believe we ought to pay for it. As I understand it, under Senator Warner's amendment, the increase will be made to increase the budget allocation to the request by the President--I agree with that--but it will not be paid for. With that I do not agree. When presented with a choice, I will vote to increase the spending to the request by the Commander in Chief because I do not think it is appropriate policy not to fully fund the Commander in Chief's request when our troops are engaged in combat half a world away. Our troops right now are engaged in direct combat in Iraq and Afghanistan and, of course, in addition to that, we are engaged globally in the war on terror. That does not mean we should not pay for these additional expenditures. Already we see record budget deficits.

We see in this budget resolution the debt of the country being increased by \$2.86 trillion over the next 5 years. That is a stunning amount of money. The assertion by some that the deficit is being reduced really pales in consideration and in comparison to what is happening to the debt.

The increases in the debt under this budget are simply staggering--\$2.86 trillion over the next 5 years. That is before the baby boomers retire, that is before the full cost of the President's tax cuts explode because they increase geometrically right beyond the budget window.

I would hope we would increase what is in the budget for our national defense to the amount requested by the President, but we do it in a way that is paid for. I think that would be the right approach. Unfortunately, Senator Warner's amendment has half of that formula. He will have the increase in funding but will not have the appropriate offsets.

We will have a vote later on the question of paying for this increase. I hope my colleagues are on notice on what this amendment will involve, and hopefully we will be on this amendment soon.

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I just think we need to send a very clear message. When we are at war, when our troops are in jeopardy, when they are in combat zones, when the Commander in Chief makes a request, we need to honor that request.

Look, I believe we ought to pay for this increase. I believe we ought to offset it with either additional revenues or spending cuts in other areas because the deficit is at record levels now and this just increases it. We are seeing dramatic increases in the debt.

We had a right to offer second-degree amendments to this amendment to provide a pay-for. We basically did not exercise that right, in an agreement to get a number of amendments up and voted on before 7 o'clock tonight. But it is our intention, with a later amendment, to offer a means of paying for this increase.

Without that before us at the moment, the choice becomes do we increase the defense expenditure to meet the request of the Commander in Chief or do we not?

I believe the imperative is clear. I believe we must raise the defense expenditure level to meet the request of the Commander in Chief when we have troops in combat half a world away fighting day and night for this country.

It is my intention to ask our colleagues to support the Warner-Stevens amendment. At a later time, it will then be my intention to ask our colleagues on both sides to find a way to pay for it and to suggest specific ways we might do that. I hope colleagues will keep an open mind on that subsequent amendment.