

Statement on HR 1591, the FY07 Emergency Supplemental - March 23, 2007

MR. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, regrettably, I rise in opposition to the Fiscal Year 2007 Emergency Supplemental Spending bill.

Earlier this year, our military submitted a request to Congress for emergency funding to protect our brave soldiers, and it is our duty to respond to this important request in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, the legislation before us today includes billions of dollars in non-emergency spending and numerous provisions relating to troop withdrawal not requested by the Administration, which have the potential to delay passage of this vital emergency funding.

Much of the extra spending included in this bill will go to wasteful pork barrel projects and non-emergency subsidy programs, including millions of dollars for spinach farmers in California and peanut storage in Georgia. While I have strongly supported some of the policy provisions added to this bill, such as the minimum wage increase and expanded funding for homeland security, I am concerned that the Democratic leadership is attempting to hold critical resources for our soldiers in limbo in order to force political votes.

Our military leaders on the ground in Iraq have warned that disruptive changes in day-to-day operations will occur without immediate supplemental funding. In fact, the acting Secretary of the Army recently stated that if it does not receive additional funding by the end of April, the military will be forced to start making difficult decisions, such as postponing repairs on equipment. Sadly, rather than providing our military with the tools it has requested, the Democratic leadership is forcing a political agenda, which is certain to lead to an impasse with the Administration and further delay this important funding.

I have disagreed with many aspects of our strategy in Iraq, and I have worked hard to convince our government to change its course in the region and begin pursuing robust diplomacy to end the conflict. Indeed, I am hopeful that my efforts, and those of my colleagues, have prompted the Administration to begin engaging in an intense diplomatic initiative to establish peace and stability, so that our troops may return home to their families. However, when it comes to funding for our soldiers who are serving in harm's way, it is not appropriate for Congress to set arbitrary timelines for withdrawal or condition military resources based on partisan objectives. It is important that our strategy in Iraq include goals for bringing the troops home, but excluding the judgment of U.S. commanders and mandating an exact deadline for withdrawal - regardless of the situation on the ground - would endanger our brave soldiers.

Mr. Chairman, the President has pledged to veto this legislation due to the inclusion of non-emergency spending and policy

provisions. We can not afford to waste precious time arguing over disingenuous political proposals and extraneous pork barrel spending projects. I intend to vote against this bill and I will adamantly oppose any attempts to play politics with funding for our soldiers.