

Castle Pushes Legislation to Support Soldiers Returning from Combat -- August 6, 2007

Washington, DC-- In a very early Sunday morning session of the House of Representatives, Delaware Congressman Mike Castle won a key assurance that congressional leaders will take-up his legislation to credit extra leave time to U.S. troops who have served in a combat zone. During debate of H.R. 3222, the Department of Defense Appropriations bill, Defense Subcommittee Chairman John Murtha and Ranking Member Bill Young pledged to address Rep. Castle's legislation as part of a House-Senate conference on the bill this fall. Rep. Castle joined an overwhelming majority in adopting the \$459.6 billion Defense Appropriations bill, 395 - 13, at approximately 1:00 early Sunday morning.

"Our troops have gone above and beyond the call of duty to risk their lives, often serving multiple deployments in Iraq or Afghanistan. Unfortunately, when these brave men and women return home, they often are faced with post-traumatic stress and other hardships resulting from their deployment in such harsh conditions. My amendment to the defense bill would make certain our troops are given time to spend with their family and friends when they return from war - which experts have shown is vital for their recuperation," Rep. Castle said.

Summary of the your amendment:

- Amendment credits troops one additional day of leave time (vacation) for every month that they are deployed in a combat zone.

- Example: If a soldier serves twelve months in Baghdad, that soldier would be credited twelve additional days of leave to be used when he or she is back home.

- Under the current Pentagon policies, all members of the Armed Forces, including those serving in the Guard and Reserve, receive 2.5 days of leave time per month - regardless of whether they are deployed in a combat zone or back in the U.S. at their home base.

- U.S. Army Medical Command has stated that spending time with family and loved ones after returning from deployment is essential to soldiers' mental health.

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