

## CASTLE SUPPORTS EMERGENCY APPROPRIATIONS BILL-- May 15, 2008

### Bill Passes House without Troop Funding

Washington, DC -- Today, Congress voted in favor of H.R. 2642, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill. The legislation was considered in three sections. Amendment one, which failed, contained funding for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Amendment two, which passed, called for a responsible redeployment strategy in Iraq, increased leave time for troops, and prohibited certain interrogation techniques. The third amendment, which also passed, will appropriate funds for domestic programs and military construction, prevent pending cuts to Medicaid, and expand education benefits for veteran soldiers.

Congressman Michael N. Castle (R-DE) supported all three amendments and issued the following statement:

"Our troops have done incredible work in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it is critical that we provide them with the protective equipment, operating funds, and counterterrorism resources. For this reason, I support the funding in this package for vital priorities like Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles, IED jamming devices, military healthcare, traumatic brain injury research, and military family support programs.

"As a leader of the House Committee on Education, I have long advocated for a permanent expansion of GI Bill education benefits for veterans. For the first time, the funding in this package would reward those soldiers who stepped forward in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks by allowing them to receive expanded education benefits in proportion to their period of service. The men and women who serve in our nation's armed forces deserve the opportunity to pursue an education, and I believe this provision represents a significant step towards the realization of that goal. In addition to financial assistance, our government must help veterans cut through the red-tape surrounding GI bill benefits, and I have introduced legislation to aid our soldiers in making this transition.

"There has to be an incentive for the Iraqi government to make political progress, and it is critical that we begin shifting the day-to-day combat mission over to the Iraqi security forces. I continue to oppose proposals in Congress that would hamstring our troops by setting a hard deadline for troop withdrawal. Last September, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker outlined a responsible plan for gradually redeploying our troops from Iraq, and I believe this plan should move forward in a way that maintains security and stability in the Middle East. Therefore, I support provisions in this bill that would set a goal of redeploying a majority of our combat troops from Iraq by the end of 2009, while permitting forces to remain in the region to conduct counterterrorism operations and assist the Iraqi security forces. Clearly, our military and foreign policy leaders must retain the ability to react to conditions on the ground, and I believe this provision allows them the appropriate flexibility in executing their mission without conditioning troop funding on arbitrary timelines or an immediate deadline for troop withdrawal.

"Additionally, I support language in the bill that would improve transparency and oversight of contractors to prevent waste and abuse in government spending. In the same way, I support sections of the bill that would require better accountability from the Iraqi government by providing an incentive for a greater Iraqi investment in the country's reconstruction.

Embracing a comprehensive regional diplomatic initiative, ensuring American soldiers are properly trained and prepared for deployments, and prohibiting torture are also key provisions which I continue to support.

"Lastly, while I intend to vote in favor of this emergency spending package, I continue to have deep concerns about the manner in which it was brought forward. In my estimate, the leaders of the House have unfairly manipulated congressional rules in severely limiting debate on this measure and restricting input from both Republicans and Democrats. Rather than using this issue as a tool to score points politically, Members from both sides of the aisle should come together in support of a workable policy to bring our troops home.

"To date, over 4,000 American soldiers - including 16 brave Delawareans - have lost their lives in Iraq. Close to 500 U.S. service members have also died in Afghanistan. Mr. Speaker, I call on my colleagues to embrace the substantive areas of this bill where we can find agreement, and join me in committing to a bipartisan approach for achieving stability and bringing our troops home to their families.

Background: Earlier this month, Rep. Castle met with Iraqi Ambassador Samir Sumaidaie to discuss the diplomatic and political strategy for achieving stability in Iraq. Rep. Castle is an original co-sponsor of H. Con. Res. 321, a resolution stressing the importance of a more comprehensive diplomatic initiative in the Middle East led by the United States, Iraq, and the international community.

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