

Mahoney Stands Up for Troops and Veterans

Strengthens Military Readiness; Supports Larger Pay Raise and Better Benefits for Troops

(December 13, 2007)

(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16) today voted to support the National Defense Authorization Act Conference Report, which authorizes \$696.3 billion to provide pay raises for our troops, improve benefits for members of the Armed Services our and set the policies and priorities for the Department of Defense (DoD) and the national security programs of the Department of Energy (DoE).

"Providing for the defense of our nation is Congress's highest responsibility. This bill authorizes critical funding to rebuild military readiness and gets our troops the equipment they need. Key to military preparedness is troop morale and this bill takes a modest step in getting our brave men and woman a well-deserved pay increase," said Congressman Tim Mahoney.

This measure provides the necessary resources to quickly and efficiently reverse the declining trends in military readiness, and also provides our service members in harm's way with the best gear and force protection possible. Under the conference report, our troops will get better health care, better pay, and the benefits they have earned.

The DOD Authorization Conference Report passed the House with strong bipartisan support by a vote of 370 - 49. This legislation is expected to be approved by the Senate and signed into law.

Highlights of the DOD Authorization Bill:

Restoring Readiness - To improve the overall state of our forces, this conference report:

Creates a \$1 billion Strategic Readiness Fund to give the Department of Defense the ability to rapidly address equipment shortfalls.

Provides an additional \$980 million for National Guard equipment.

Requires rating and reporting of National Guard readiness for homeland defense missions

Expands the number of troops to meet our commitments and reduces strain by authorizing 13,000 additional soldiers for the Army and 9,000 additional Marines.

Providing for Service Members and Their Families - To support our troops, veterans, and military families, this conference report:

Provides for a 3.5% pay raise for our troops and increases monthly hardship duty pay to a maximum of \$1,500, which is higher than President Bush requested.

Blocks President Bush's efforts to raise both TRICARE and pharmacy user fees, which prevents over \$1.86 billion in healthcare costs from being passed on to service members, retirees and their families.

Improves educational benefits for service members and their families

Authorizes a monthly payment of \$50 to surviving spouses who are denied the full amount of their Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) benefit because of concurrent receipt of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC).

Authorizes disabled retirees, who are considered 100% disabled by virtue of being unemployable, to receive full concurrent receipt of military retired pay and disability compensation effective January 1, 2005.

Protecting Our Troops in Harms Way - Our service members are courageously doing their duty overseas in multiple wars, and it is Congress' responsibility to provide them with the best gear and force protection possible. This conference report authorizes funding to meet those needs, including:

Authorizes \$17.6 billion, an increase of \$865 million, for additional Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles. This more than fully funds the current MRAP vehicle requirement for 15,374 vehicles.

Authorizes \$4.77 billion to fully fund the anti-IED efforts of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO).

Authorizes more than \$1.2 billion for the continued purchase of personal body armor and associated individual protective components for our service members serving overseas.

Authorizes \$3.3 billion for up-armored Humvees.

Requires an Evaluation of active protection systems to ensure our troops are given the best equipment to keep them safe.

Keeping Nuclear Weapons Out of the Hands of Terrorists -

Authorizes nearly \$2 billion, an increase of \$235 million, to strengthen and expand the nuclear nonproliferation programs of the Energy Department's NNSA (National Nuclear Security Administration), including such programs as the Global Initiatives for Proliferation Prevention and the Elimination of Weapons-Grade Plutonium program.

Authorizes \$428 million, an increase of \$80 million, to strengthen and expand the Department of Defense's Counter-Threat Reduction (CTR) nonproliferation program, which is targeted at securing nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union.

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