

Measure Includes Hinchey-Cosponsored Amendment To Increase Military's Energy Efficiency

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) last night helped the House pass a comprehensive bill to help keep troops safe, restore military readiness and provide servicemen and women with a much-needed pay raise. The congressman also helped the House pass two amendments he cosponsored with Congressman Jay Inslee (D-WA) that would increase the military's energy efficiency. The overall measure, the Defense Authorization bill, was approved by a margin of 384-23. President Bush, who opposes Democrats' effort to provide troops with a 3.9 percent pay raise has threatened to veto this legislation.

"This bill provides much needed support for our troops in the form of more adequate equipment, better training, and a pay raise," Hinchey said. "Saying that one 'supports the troops' is not enough. Democrats have backed up their rhetoric by authorizing the necessary resources to make our military stronger and to more adequately compensate our servicemen and women for the tremendous sacrifices they make on our behalf."

The legislation provides all service members a pay raise of 3.9 percent -- 0.5 percent more than the president's budget request and extends the authority for the Defense Department to offer bonuses and incentive pay. The bill also aids servicemen and women and their families by rejecting the president's plan to increase premiums and co-pays for the military and retirees who are enrolled in the TRICARE system -- the military's health care program. All told, this provision will save troops, their families and military retirees \$1.2 billion.

The bill also takes critical steps to end the military's readiness crisis. Under President Bush, Army readiness has dropped to unprecedented levels, and Army National Guard units have, on average, only 63 percent of their required equipment. Additionally, many stateside units are not fully equipped and would not be considered ready if called upon to respond during an emergency. The measure helps restore the nation's military readiness by funding the Army's and Marine Corps' equipment reset requirements, authorizing nearly \$2 billion for unfunded readiness initiatives including addressing additional equipment shortfalls, and authorizing \$800 million to provide the National Guard and Reserve critically needed equipment.

The two amendments that Hinchey cosponsored and helped pass both help make the Pentagon and its partners more energy efficient. The first amendment, which directs the Secretary of Defense to study the use of power management software at Department of Defense facilities, has great potential to reduce the amount of electricity consumed by computers, monitors, and other electronic equipment. The amendment is an important first step toward adopting software for agency computers that would reduce power consumption and save \$20 a year per machine in energy costs, without hindering performance.

"The amendments we passed today will help make the Pentagon more energy efficient, which will help lower costs and analyze ways to reduce greenhouse emissions," Hinchey said. "As we continue the great shift to cleaner, renewable energy, the federal government must lead by example."

The other amendment would initiate a study by the Department of Defense to determine what methods and process would need to be put in place to allow for the consideration of greenhouse gas emissions in the Department of Defense's acquisition process. At this time, the Department of Defense has no method or metric to consider this even if they were directed to do so. Currently the Department of Defense is the biggest energy consumer in America, but they have made great strides in exploring alternative energy sources in both powering bases as well as supplying fuel for tactical vehicles.

The bill also protects troops in harm's way by authorizing \$2.6 billion for additional Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles, \$947 million for additional Up-Armored Humvees, and \$783 million for the continued procurement and enhancement of personal body armor.