



# U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

*PRESS RELEASE*

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For immediate release: Friday, March 23, 2007

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## **Byrd Rejects White House Veto Threats**

WASHINGTON, D.C.... The White House has threatened to veto supplemental funding legislation for what it characterizes as excessive and extraneous spending. The President has gone so far as to assert that adding funds to care for wounded veterans and to help the Gulf Region to rebuild from Hurricane Katrina is equal to holding hostage the funding for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, on Friday flatly rejected the White House contention. His statement is below.

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The Senate legislation focuses resources on some of the nation's most pressing emergencies. We provide more than \$96 billion for the men and women of our military. We ensure that wounded veterans home from Iraq do not suffer more injury from substandard medical care and facilities. We provide funding for health and education, for law enforcement, and for transit systems in the Gulf region, in order to help rebuild, to bring people back to work, and to bring the region back to life. We take steps to fill the huge gaps in our security against terrorism here at home -- gaps that the Bush Administration has utterly failed to address.

The White House should not allow its political priorities to hold hostage funding for our veterans and injured soldiers or for the people still desperate for help after Hurricane Katrina. The Gulf Coast is crying out for assistance. Our troops and our veterans are standing in long lines for medical care. The President continues to warn that we are a nation at grave risk of terrorist attacks, but he failed to request a single dime for homeland security priorities. The American people are sick and tired of Bush Administration bellicosity. The White House ought to stop worrying about its political future, and instead should work with Congress to guarantee the security and economic future of this nation.

The Secretary of Defense has stated that the funding for the military and rebuilding Iraq is needed by the end of April. We will meet that goal. But the Administration should place the same priority on rebuilding America's Gulf Region. Those dollars have been stymied for far too long because of White House political games. The White House will pay to reconstruct Iraq, but apparently reconstructing Louisiana and Mississippi isn't as important. The Administration should place priority on funding the medical care of our troops and our veterans, instead of hoping that stories about shameful conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center will quietly disappear. The Administration should place priority on the real needs of this nation, and not on the political needs of a lame-duck White House.

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