



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

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CHAIRMAN BYRD OBJECTS TO UNILATERAL DECISION TO DELAY FUNDING FOR BORDER FENCING

Washington, DC – Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, has written to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), questioning the Bush Administration's unilateral decision to defer until "future years" the apportionment of funds for the construction of border fencing as part of our on-going homeland security efforts.

In a February 15th letter to OMB Director Jim Nussle, Byrd wrote that, "for over three years, there has been a bipartisan consensus in the Congress to dedicate more resources to secure our borders. Repeatedly, often over the objections of the Administration, the Congress has added funds above the President's request for border security. During Senate debate on the FY 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, senator after senator rose to speak in support of emergency border security funding. On a 97-1 vote, the Senate added \$3 billion in emergency funding for border security."

"A critical component of that emergency funding, and one repeatedly called for by members of both Houses, is funding for fencing, vehicle barriers, and tactical infrastructure along the Southwest border. The FY 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations Act provided a total of \$1.225 billion -- \$225 million above the request, solely for this purpose. I am deeply troubled to learn the Office of Management and Budget has deferred until 'future years' apportionment of \$225 million of these border fencing funds."

"I view this as a unilateral action on the part of the White House to slow progress in deploying security measures on our southern border. It is imperative that all of the border security funding approved on a bipartisan basis by Congress be made available immediately; not be deferred until 'future years.' I expect that the expenditure plan for these funds, which is due by law to the Congress by next month, will include plans to expend the full \$1.225 billion for border fencing and other technology this fiscal year," Byrd concluded.

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