



## U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

*PRESS RELEASE*

Opening Statement  
Senator Robert C. Byrd  
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee  
June 19, 2008

Good afternoon.

This afternoon's agenda includes:

- adoption of the 302(b) allocations for the twelve subcommittees;
- reporting the FY 2009 Homeland Security Appropriations bill; and
- reporting the FY 2009 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill.

In this effort, I am joined by my distinguished colleague and ranking member, Senator Thad Cochran. Thad and I also serve as the Ranking Member and Chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, and we will have more to say about that matter after the Committee adopts the usual motions.

Senator Cochran and I are determined to complete Committee consideration of the FY 2009 Appropriations bills by the end of July. We intend to produce twelve bipartisan, fiscally responsible appropriations bills.

In recent months, there has been considerable discussion of how Congress should treat so-called earmarks in the 2009 bills. Last year, we reduced earmarks by 40 percent below the levels that the President approved in 2005. We added unprecedented levels of transparency and accountability to the process. This year, we will follow those same rules. Every earmark will be identified with the purpose, the amount, and the Member who requested the earmark. Each Senator requesting an earmark funded by this Committee will certify that he or she or their immediate family has no financial interest in the earmarks he or she requested. We will limit earmarks this year to the reduced level that Congress approved for 2008.

We will not shy away from our constitutional prerogatives. The power of the purse rests with the Congress, the people's branch of government. We will make careful choices about the allocation of the people's money and we will stand by those choices.

With regard to the 302 (b) allocations that are before each Member, Congress approved a budget resolution that reduces deficits over the next five years and provides for an increase above the President's request for 2009 discretionary programs of \$21 billion. This allocation will permit the Committee to support our troops and address critical needs here at home. With violent crime growing in this country in 2005 and 2006, this is not the year to cut funding for state and local law enforcement. With the world economy becoming increasingly competitive, now is not the

time to reduce science and technology programs. Senator Mikulski and Senator Shelby will address these issues today.

With unemployment on the rise, this is not the time to be cutting education and job training programs. With an aging nation, now is not the time to freeze funding for NIH, or Community Health Centers, or rural health programs. Senator Harkin and Senator Specter will restore funding for these programs when they mark up the Labor/HHS/Education bill on June 26th. With record gas prices, this is not the year to cut funding for renewable energy, or fuel efficiency research. Senator Dorgan and Senator Domenici will address those issues when they mark up the Energy and Water bill on July 10th. We also must invest in our infrastructure, and I look forward to Senator Murray and Senator Bond marking up the Transportation and Housing bill on July 10th. We must do more for our veterans, and I look forward to Senator Johnson and Senator Hutchison marking up the Military Construction/ Veterans bill on July 17<sup>th</sup>.

Regrettably, the President has already said he will veto any bill that exceeds his request. That is his right, but such actions would be a mistake for the nation. There are consequences for failing to invest in America. I urge adoption of the 302 (b) allocation which is in compliance with the budget resolution approved by the Congress.

I now turn to the Ranking Member for any opening remarks that he wishes to make and to offer the usual motions.