



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

PRESS RELEASE

**OPENING STATEMENT
SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD
CHAIRMAN, SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
July 10, 2008**

The Committee will come to order.

This afternoon's agenda includes:

Reporting the FY 2009 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill; reporting the FY 2009 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill; and reporting the FY 2009 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill.

In this effort, I am joined by my distinguished colleague and ranking member, Senator Thad Cochran. Senator Cochran and I are determined to complete Committee consideration of the FY 2009 Appropriations bills by the end of this month. We have made good progress. So far, we have reported three appropriations bills, and we will mark up three more today.

Today, the Committee considers three bipartisan bills that make critical investments in our nation, including infrastructure and energy independence.

In the last year, the price of a barrel of oil has grown by 97 percent, yet the President proposes to cut funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy programs by \$467 million. With the skyrocketing price of gas, mass transit is being used at record levels, yet the President proposes to cut Amtrak by \$525 million. In the last eighteen months, the President has declared disasters for 74 floods in 33 States, yet President Bush proposes to cut funding for building and repairing levees.

The Committee has before it three bills that respond to the needs of the American people. We provide funds to build and repair mass transit systems, highways, and bridges; to help Americans find housing; and to invest in renewable energy, energy efficiency, battery research and development, nuclear energy, and fossil fuels. We also make sure that the Commodity Futures Trading Commission has the resources it needs to investigate allegations that excessive speculation in the oil and gasoline markets have driven up the price of energy.

Rather than recognizing the reality that Americans face in their daily lives, the President has threatened to veto any bill that exceeds his request, which would include all three of these bills.

I have urged the bipartisan leadership to make time on the floor for consideration of our appropriations bills. Unfortunately, President Bush's veto threats have discouraged some from wanting to get important funding legislation on the Senate floor. We are a separate branch, and we hold the power over the purse. This Senator will continue to urge that we complete our work.

For the information of all Senators, on Tuesday, July 22, 2008, the Committee will meet to mark up a second supplemental appropriations bill. The thrust of this legislation will be to provide

critical infrastructure funding and to respond to national disasters, such as the California wildfires, the Midwest floods, and Hurricane Katrina.

As I indicated two weeks ago, it is my intention to schedule the markup of the FY 2009 Interior Appropriations bill. We will mark up that bill on Thursday, July 24, 2008, along with the Defense and Legislative Branch Appropriations bills.

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