



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

PRESS RELEASE

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Senator Robert C. Byrd, (D-W.Va.) today released the following summary of provisions what will be included in the FY 2008 Emergency Supplemental legislation that is scheduled to be considered by the full Senate Appropriations Committee on Thursday, May 8, 2008. Byrd noted that “while the President is seeking to rebuild Baghdad, he is showing callous disregard to help rebuild on American soil or to aid struggling Americans. And the product that will be before the Committee tomorrow will seek to begin to address our needs here at home.”

HIGHLIGHTS OF SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE SUPPLEMENTAL MARK

Emergency Unemployment Insurance

This provision extends unemployment benefits by 13 weeks for all workers nationwide and provides an additional 13 weeks for workers in high-unemployment states. This extension is critically needed and mirrors actions taken in recent recessions. More than one-third of UI recipients exhaust their benefits before finding a job. And more than 2.5 million people ran out of benefits in 2007 alone and even more will follow in 2008 unless action is taken.

By extending UI benefits now, Congress can provide an immediate boost for the economy, and at the same time, help working families weather the storm. Economists agree that extending unemployment benefits is a powerful, cost-effective way to stimulate the economy—every dollar spent on benefits leads to \$1.64 in economic growth.

Medicaid

This provision imposes delays on seven Medicaid rules issued by the Administration. The seven rules would force cuts in school-based, rehabilitation, and case management services. Among other things, the rules would also change the definition of public provider, the definition of outpatient services, and the policy on intergovernmental transfers, the ability of states to impose taxes on health care providers, and eliminate payment for graduate medical education.

These regulations will shift millions of dollars in health care costs to state and local budgets at a time when they are already under financial pressure due to the bad economy. The National Governors' Association has asked Congress to extend these moratoria.

G.I. Education Assistance

The mark includes a new educational assistance benefit for service members who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001, including activated reservists and National Guard. To qualify, veterans must have served at least three to thirty-six months of qualified active duty, beginning on or after September 11, 2001. Educational benefits will be paid in amounts linked to the amount of active duty served in the military after September 11. Veterans would receive some amount of assistance proportional to their service for 36 month (four academic years). Veterans would still be eligible to receive any incentive-based supplemental educational assistance from their military branch for which they qualify. Benefits provided under this title would allow veterans pursuing an approved program of education to receive payments covering the established charges of their program, up to the cost of the most expensive in-state public school, plus a monthly stipend equivalent to housing costs in their area. Provisions would also create a new program in which the government will agree to match, dollar for dollar, any voluntary additional contributions to veterans from institutions whose tuition is more expensive than the maximum educational assistance provided under the new benefit. Additionally, veterans would have up to fifteen years, compared to ten years under the current Montgomery GI Bill, after they leave active duty to use their educational assistance entitlement

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and other natural disasters -- \$10.4 billion

The Committee mark will include \$10.4 billion for recovery efforts resulting from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and other natural disasters – a \$4.6 billion increase over the President's request.

Since 2007, the President has designated disasters for floods 56 times in thirty-one States, yet he opposes funding for levee repairs and other flood mitigation efforts.

Global Food Aid -- \$1.245 billion

The recommendation includes \$850 million in PL480 Title II grants for international food assistance in fiscal year 2008 and an additional \$395 million to become available on October 1, 2008 for a total of \$1.245 billion, a **\$500 million increase** over the President's request.

State and Local Law Enforcement, Byrne Formula Grants -- \$490 million

The Committee recommendation includes \$490 million for Byrne formula grants. The FY2008 Omnibus provided just \$170 million for Byrne, \$349 million below the FY 2007 level and 80% below the level ten years ago. Yet violent crime grew in 2005 and 2006 for the first time since 1991. Supplemental funding will ensure a total of \$660 million in FY 2008 for Byrne formula grants. Senators have heard compelling arguments from representatives of law enforcement organizations that the cuts have had an immediate and negative impact on their ability to fight crime and protect communities. There is strong bi-partisan support for this additional funding. Fifty-six Senators have requested an additional \$490 million for Byrne formula grants.

Federal Highway Administration Emergency Relief Program -- \$451 million

The bill includes \$451 million for the Emergency Relief program, which funds the repair or reconstruction of roads and bridges that have been damaged by unexpected catastrophes or natural disasters. The funding provided will cover the backlog of projects from disasters occurring in fiscal year 2005 and forward.

The President seeks more funding for roads in Iraq but opposes funding to repair storm-damaged roads in America.

Food and Drug Administration -- \$275 million

\$275 million for the Food and Drug Administration – including \$125 million for food safety activities, and \$100 million for medical product and drug safety activities.

Securing Rural Schools -- \$400 million

Without this funding almost 7,000 teachers and other educational staff will be laid off across the country, as of June 30, 2008 when their contracts expire.

VA Polytrauma Centers -- \$437.1 million

The recommendation includes \$437.1 million for construction at VA polytrauma centers. The VA health care system, through its polytrauma network, continues to provide significant expertise in the treatment and rehabilitation of both active duty and separated Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans suffering from polytraumatic injuries. These two centers are central to inpatient rehabilitation of soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Science Initiative -- \$1.2 billion

To help promote long-term economic development, the Committee is recommending a total of \$1.2 billion for programs under the jurisdiction of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health and Department of Energy.

Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom -- \$168.9 billion

Provides additional fiscal year 2008 emergency spending for the Department of Defense and provides an additional \$65.9 billion in fiscal year 2009 emergency spending, which will become available to the Department of Defense on October 1, 2008.

The Committee recommendation is \$415 million above the President's request for DOD and Military Construction related programs including increases for National Guard Equipment (\$825 million); Family Child Care Facilities (\$168 million); Defense Health Programs (\$1.627 billion); and Barrack Improvements (\$700 million).

Byrd also noted that in an effort to expedite Committee consideration of these measures that he would defer until Senate floor consideration debate on policy language regarding operation in Iraq.

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