



## U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

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Contact: John Bray, (202) 224-3904

### **Chairman Byrd Opening Statement at Senate Appropriations Committee Markup of FY 2008 Defense Appropriations Legislation**

Washington, D.C. . Senator Robert C. Byrd, D.W.Va., Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, delivered the following opening statement prior to the committee's passage of the FY 2008 Department of Defense Appropriations bill. The committee has now reported all 12 annual appropriations bills to the full Senate.

Senator Byrd's Statement is below

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This morning we are meeting to report the FY 2008 Department of Defense Appropriations bill.

With today's action, my distinguished colleague and friend, Senator Thad Cochran, and I will have presided over the reporting of the twelfth and final FY 2008 appropriations bill. I thank all Members of the Committee for their cooperation.

The Senate has completed work on four of the twelve annual appropriations bills and we hope to bring this bill to the floor following action on the Defense Authorization bill.

In order to facilitate action on this bill, the bill that is before the Committee does not include funding or policy provisions related to the war in Iraq. The President has requested emergency appropriations of over \$150 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and for rebuilding Baghdad. According to press reports, the Administration is contemplating increasing that request to as much as \$200 billion. Shortly, the Committee will hold a hearing on that request, and on the President's September 15 report on the war. After reviewing the President's report, General Petraeus's report, and the revised supplemental request, we plan on marking up an emergency supplemental bill in October. This Committee will review that request carefully. I assure the Committee that we will not write a blank check for this war.

I am very disappointed that the President has threatened to veto any appropriations bill that exceeds his request. He has threatened to veto eight of the twelve bills, including all of the major domestic bills.

These bills will help to educate our children, secure our homeland, support rural America, and promote a competitive economy. The bills provide the essential building blocks for the foundations of our great country.

On the one hand, the President is seeking over \$150 billion of emergency appropriations to fight the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and to help rebuild Baghdad.

At the same, the President wants to veto domestic bills because we are just \$22 billion, or one percent, above his budget request. The President even asserts that the \$22 billion for programs here in America will put economic growth at risk.

The President characterizes the \$22 billion increase above his request as "increased" spending. In fact, \$19 billion of the \$22 billion "increase" are actually restorations of the President's irresponsible proposals to cut spending.

For example,

- With violent crime on the rise, the President proposes to cut State and local law enforcement by \$1.5 billion;
- Even though Hurricane Katrina proved that the government is not prepared to handle a major disaster, the President proposes to cut first responder grants by 1.2 billion;
- A cut of \$279 million is proposed for studying cancer, diabetes and heart disease by the National Institutes of Health;
- Over \$3 billion of cuts are proposed for education programs, including special education, safe and drug free schools, and improving teacher quality;
- Over \$3 billion of cuts are proposed to infrastructure programs such as highway and transit funding, rural wastewater grants, levees and dams, clean water grants, airport improvements, and Amtrak;
- The President also proposes to cut \$1 billion from health programs, such as rural health, health professions, preventive health, and mental health grants, and over \$300 million from Low Income Home Energy Assistance.

In the domestic bills that have been approved by this Committee by nearly unanimous votes, we restore these ill-considered cuts.

The President should reconsider his veto threats so that this Congress can get on with the business of making careful choices about programs that contribute to a safe and prosperous nation.

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

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