

□ ***Bill would increase funding for aviation, port and border security***

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WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio voted today in favor of the fiscal year 2007 Homeland Security Appropriations Act, which would raise the funding level of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to \$34.8 billion, a 7 percent increase over last year. The bill passed the House today.

Included in the bill is an increase in funding for Customs and Border Protection, including 1,500 additional border patrol agents and \$1.188 billion in funding for border fencing, infrastructure and technology. In addition, the bill criminalizes building tunnels under the U.S. border and doubles penalties for smuggling illegal immigrants or illegal items through such tunnels.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) received a 3 percent increase in funding over last year, including \$501 million for the purchase, installation and maintenance of an explosive detection system at airports across the country. The bill also includes \$4.3 billion for port, container and cargo security, an increase of \$600 million (14 percent) over the current funding.

The legislation also bans border patrol agents from preventing individuals from bringing prescription drugs from Canada into the U.S. for their personal use. In addition, the bill makes changes to improve the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) by elevating the status of its director and prohibiting the transfer of the agency's authority, personnel, assets or funding.

“Increased security at our borders, ports and in our aviation system are among my top priorities, and I am pleased to see that reflected in this bill,” DeFazio said. “We still have a long way to go toward ensuring Americans are as safe as possible, but today's legislation is a good step in the right direction.”

"Though it is only a Band-Aid solution to a larger problem, it is also good news that Americans will now be able to purchase cheaper prescription drugs from Canada without having to worry about being detained at the border."

The House and Senate previously approved their own Homeland Security appropriations bills. Today's vote was on a conference report that reconciled the two bills. This legislation must now be approved by the Senate before it is sent to the president to be signed into law.