

May 16, 2007

WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Oregon) today voted in favor of H.R. 1585, the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act. The authorization bill sets Pentagon personnel and weapons policies for next year and provides guidance to congressional appropriators on funding levels for a variety of procurement, research and development programs.

"The Bush administration has allowed our military forces to become over-stretched and under-equipped, which harms our national security and puts individual troops at risk," said DeFazio. "This legislation will begin to reverse the hollowing out of our forces that has happened on the President's watch."

H.R. 1585 includes several provisions to improve benefits for our troops and military retirees:

A 3.5% across-the-board pay raise, higher than proposed by the President, plus additional money for targeted bonuses;

Prohibits the TRICARE military health care and pharmacy fee increases proposed by the President that would have shifted \$1.86 billion in health care costs onto the backs of service members and their families;

Responds to the problems found at Walter Reed and other facilities by incorporating the provisions of the Wounded Warriors bill. The Wounded Warriors bill cuts bureaucratic red tape; improves the transition of service members from the DOD to the VA; creates a new system of case managers, advocates and counselors for wounded service members to monitor progress, track cases and ensure proper care; and establishes a toll-free hotline for service personnel and family members to report problems with care of facilities, among other provisions;

Establishes a Traumatic Brain Injury Initiative to improve prevention, identification and treatment of this growing injury associated with the war in Iraq;

Authorizes an increase in the size of the Army by 36,000, Marines by 9,000, and the Army National Guard by 1,300 in order to reduce the stress on existing forces.

H.R. 1585 also includes funding guidelines for critical equipment and programs:

\$4.1 billion for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) armored vehicles,

\$1.55 billion more than requested by the President;

\$1.2 billion for individual body armor;

\$2.5 billion for up-armored Humvees;

\$4.5 billion to fund efforts to jam and protect against roadside bombs;

\$13.6 billion to fully address equipment repair and replacement needs for the Army and \$8.2 billion to reset equipment for Marines;

\$1 billion for National Guard equipment shortfalls;

Increases funding for nuclear non-proliferation programs at both the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense;

And the bill reduces funding for questionable administration priorities:

Reduces overall funding for national missile defense by \$764.2 million and blocks construction of a third missile defense site in Eastern Europe.

Reduces funding for the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program by \$45 million (nearly 40%), the administration's initiative to create a new nuclear weapon