

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012

SPEECH OF

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 24, 2011

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1540) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2012 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes:

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chair, today I will vote against the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (NDAA). While nothing is more important than providing the resources needed to keep America and our men and women in uniform safe, this authorization spends too much while falling short in important areas.

The bill authorizes \$690.1 billion for defense programs in FY12. This level of defense spending is almost as much as the rest of the world combined—most of which is done by friendly allies such as NATO (approximately \$350 billion). It also includes an additional \$118.9 billion in specific funds for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan without a plan for a full redeployment from the region. I am disappointed that amendments to require a rapid and thoughtful withdrawal from Afghanistan were not approved. For me, this is reason enough not to support this legislation.

The bill continues the misguided affront on civil liberties by further stalling the implementation of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” and requires that “marriage” for any regulation or benefit program at DoD means only a legal union between one man and one woman. This is a step backwards and unacceptable.

It reverses the House victory from earlier this year that finally eliminated the unnecessary alternate engine for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Similarly, the bill continues to fund the Marine Corps’ Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV) which has also been cited as uneconomical and unwanted by the Secretary of Defense.

Embarrassingly, this authorization contains two key provisions that continue to tie the President’s hands by restricting his ability to transfer detainees to the United States for trial in Federal court and to release detainees to countries willing to take them. It is absurd to think that the United States, which currently has thousands of dangerous criminals locked safely behind bars, is incapable of doing the same for terrorists. These provisions continue the Guantanamo quagmire which is ill-advised and a sign of failure at home and to those observing abroad.

There are many positive elements in the bill, such as new rights and protections for victims of sexual assault in the military and increased access to mental health providers for our Reserves. I am pleased three of my amendments were included in the legislation. One amendment lifts the veil on classified immunity for defense contractors, a practice that exposed 36 of our Oregon National Guardsmen to toxic chemicals in Iraq. The other two will help protect our troops on the battlefield and save billions of dollars through energy efficiency initia-

tives. Their inclusion, however, does not offset the overall authorization which fails to reflect America’s priorities or our national security realities.

At a time when Americans are calling for reform, this bill—despite some positives—continues our operations in Afghanistan with no plan for withdrawal, ramps up spending and discriminates against our service members. I am hopeful that my colleagues in the Senate can remove some of the provisions that do little to make America secure while we continue to spend almost as much on defense as the rest of the world combined.

REMEMBERING MEMORIAL DAY

HON. MIKE PENCE

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 26, 2011

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, Memorial Day has significant meaning to so many Americans. Unlike the day every fall when we thank those who fought and came home, Memorial Day is that day every spring when we remember those who didn’t make it back.

In a tradition that began just three years after the end of the Civil War, Americans set aside the 30th day of May each year to remember the sacrifice made by our service men and women who lost their lives in defense of freedom. Each one of those brave souls answered the call to duty, offering to give whatever it would take to keep us safe.

On May 30, 1868, flowers were placed on the graves of both Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. This tradition continues to this day, as millions of Americans have continued to take part in this humble offer of thanks.

It is our duty to make sure those who served and their families who endure the many stresses of military life know that we appreciate their willingness to sacrifice for our cause that is freedom. We can never repay the debt we owe, but we will continue to honor their service and sacrifice.

I urge all Hoosiers to take time on Memorial Day to attend a local service remembering our fallen heroes and the families who have made freedom possible. We must mourn those who have fallen and pray for those who stand firmly in the face of unspeakable horrors at this very hour in places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

As Americans, we inherit what Lincoln called in his first inaugural address the “mystic chords of memory stretching from every patriot grave.” They bind us to the great and the humble, the known and unknown, of Americans past.

The brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces, both past and present, it was their duty to serve. As proud Americans, let this Memorial Day serve as a reminder that it is our duty to always remember those soldiers who have laid down such a sacrifice on our behalf.

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SPEECH OF

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 24, 2011

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Mr. STARK. Mr. Chair, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1540, the National Defense Authorization Act.

It does not make sense to waste billions of tax dollars on an already bloated defense department, particularly in our current economic state. This bill is loaded with unnecessary and redundant funding. For example, it calls for the reckless continuation of the V-22 Osprey program, which has killed over 30 Americans in training alone, and whose termination could save us \$10–12 billion over the next 10 years.

Defense spending currently constitutes almost 60 percent of our discretionary spending. As we are forced to consider cutting important programs that working families depend on, we cannot continue to spend money we do not have—especially on an overly saturated Department of Defense. Americans have voiced their priorities: They want jobs, affordable health care and better education. This Congress must listen.

I have not voted in support of a defense authorization bill throughout my tenure in Congress and I do not intend to start now.

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SPEECH OF

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 24, 2011

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Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Chair, Chairman MCKEON and Chairman SMITH, thank you for working together on thoughtful procurement reform in the context of this NDAA. As I have said many times before, procurement should not be about theology. Decisions to insure or outsource should never be made on the a priori assumption that less or more government participation will save money. Therefore, I was supportive of including language in the NDAA which would restore the A-76 process. While we must be vigilant to ensure this process accurately accounts for costs, there is no question that analysis must precede insourcing or outsourcing decisions, and A-76 at least attempts to create an analytical process. The fact that such a process was abused during the Bush administration