will continue, to reach out to people with special needs to make available the wonderful resources on the island.

I am happy to take the chairman up on his invitation to visit the island.

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER).

Mr. HUNTER. That island is over 50 square miles. Can the gentlewoman tell me how many people from the public visit the island per day on a given day?

I yield to the gentlewoman.

Mrs. CAPPS. I don't have those numbers, but I can certainly make them available to you. Even with it being off limits to the public 5 months of the year, it is either 5,000 or 8,000 visitors that were out there last year. Part of the attraction of the island is its remoteness and the fact that it is set apart.

Mr. HUNTER. Reclaiming my time, if there are 5,000 people per year, that means roughly 20 people per day on that entire island. That's 5,000 people. With 365 days a year, 10 people a day, so 3,000 people and if you double that, 20 people a day for 50-square miles. That means there is one visitor from the public per 2 square miles on that island per day.

Now we have many, many places in America where we have mixed use, where you have hunters and fishermen and members of the public. These disabled veterans, they are not going to push anybody off the island. If you compare that to our other parks like Yosemite, with thousands of peole coming per day, 10 or 20 people per day on a 50-square mile is no density whatsoever.

In fact, I bet you that the park employees, the U.S. Government employees, on many days outnumber, because there are more than 20 of them at any time on the island, I bet you they outnumber the number of visitors.

I will tell the gentlewoman, because you have to take a boat trip or an airplane to get to that park, you will never have the type of visitors you get in parks where people can drive up. So that makes it perfect for these wounded people, these great American veterans, to come on over and have a great outdoor experience.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, the rule before us makes in order a balanced agreement on the fiscal year 2007 Defense authorization bill. I urge all Members to support its adoption.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Today, in closing, I want to reiterate the importance of passing this rule. This rule allows us to move forward and pass necessary legislation and do the business of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I particularly again want to thank the distinguished chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), and also the ranking member, the distinguished gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON). They have worked together on this legislation and presented us with a truly model bill and one I think they adjusted during the legislative process to meet the needs of American men and women who are serving under very difficult circumstances to protect this country.

I particularly appreciate the fact that they made sure that these deserving individuals got a pay raise, that they made sure that the people who defended the country in the past were not subjected to unnecessary fee increases in the Tricare system, and they worked hard to shift funds towards force protection and the protection of individual American soldiers. And, at the same time, they addressed the very, very serious and critical needs of the Army and Marine Corps in terms of additional personnel and additional equipment.

I think the chairman and the ranking member can be exceptionally proud of their efforts, and I think all of us can appreciate the bipartisan spirit that the members of the House Armed Services Committee acted in, and I am sure when we vote later today we will have a strong vote in support of the legislation.

Obviously, it comes as no surprise that I intend to vote for the rule and the underlying legislation. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RESIGNATION FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY) laid before the House the following resignation from the House of Representatives:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, September 29, 2006.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Capitol Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I hereby resign as the representative of the 16th Congressional District of Florida, effective today.

Sincerely,

MARK FOLEY,
Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, September 29, 2006.

Hon. JEB BUSH,
Governor, State of Florida,
Tallahassee, FL.

DEAR GOVERNOR BUSH: I hereby resign as the representative of the 16th Congressional District of Florida, effective today.

Sincerely,

MARK FOLEY,
Member of Congress.

JOHN WARNER NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1062, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 5122) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2007 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1062, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of today.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report currently under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me start out by saying this is a tough job for a lot of our members of the committee and the subcommittees that make up the Armed Services Committee. It involves a lot of travel to the warfighting theaters. Almost every member on our committee has gone multiple times to Iraq and Afghanistan. It involves a lot of time away from families and a lot of tough work in committees. It involves a lot of analyses to try to figure out how to manage the logistical problems of all of the problems that attend the war fight in two theaters, Iraq and Afghanistan, and the war against terror around the world, and at the same time look over that horizon and try to exercise some vision as to what the next conflict may be and what we have to do to prepare for the future.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, I could have no better partner in that endeavor than the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON).

□ 1630

Mr. SKELTON is a tremendous, tremendous guy. And he has got kind of a corporate memory in terms of military history. He has got a recommended reading list for all of us. He analyzes the present situation through the prism of history. We all appreciate that. And today we actually dressed in uniform. That is amazing. And without design, I might say. We simply came in with the same outfits because this is

the military and you have got to be in uniform.

Mr. Speaker, this is an immense bill, $532-plus billion. We did something very unusual in this bill and I think unprecedented, and that is that we added to the bill that includes lots of money for force protection, for body armor, for up-armored Humvees, for surveillance capability to fight the IED war in Afghanistan and Iraq, lots of things to support the troops, and, of course, all of the quality-of-life issues for the troops.

This pay raise this year means that over the last 80 years, we will have increased pay by a little more than 40 percent for our men and women in uniform. The base readiness of our forces and military construction and all the things that combine to make America's defense apparatus the strongest in the world, we did all of that, but this year we did something extra. We asked the Army and the Marine Corps to come in and testify to our committee, largely in classified session, as to what shortages they had that they needed to be funded so that they could take the tanks, the trucks, the fixed-wing aircraft, and the helicopters and all the other platforms and pieces of equipment for the Marines and the Army and reset them, that is, repair them as they come off the battlefield so that they can be ready to go again.

A massive analysis. And they came forth and they gave us that analysis. And when we got finished, we funded, we authorized on top of the defense budget $20-plus billion to make up the total reset cost, every dime, that was submitted to us by the United States Marine Corps and the United States Army. And the appropriations committees, God bless them, did the same thing and followed the authorizing committees on that. And that is a tribute, I think, to all of our Members, all of our colleagues who worked on and voted on that very important piece of funding.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a great bill. I want to mention that we have wonderful members on both sides of the aisle that make up this committee.

And JOEL HEFLEY is leaving after many, many years, a great personal friend and a guy who is kind of architect of privatization of housing so that American military families, many of whom were living in homes that were built 40, 50, 60, and 70 years ago and were under some sort of disrepair, now live in new homes that afford a great quality of life. And many of the developments now that they have come in and built on military bases have community centers. I have been in a number of them, where families can come in and enjoy swimming pools and recreation and moms can come in and work out and have their toddlers in a little room right off the exercise room and keep watch on their kids while they are having a little relaxation and a little rest and where families can get together for social activities.

This new military construction that is springing up all over the United States at our bases is largely a function of Mr. HEFLEY's foresight and vision, and he is leaving us after those many years. I have often said JOEL HEFLEY was the best cowboy in Congress. He used to rodeo with the great Casey Tibbs and a number of other rodeo greats. He is a wonderful guy whose word was his bond and still is, and we wish him the very best.

And along with him now leaving us and running for Governor in Nevada is Mr. JIM GIBBONS. JIM GIBBONS also brought a great deal of background and expertise to our committee. As a fighter pilot who worked the Desert Storm I operation and who understands tactical aircraft as well or better than any member of the Armed Services Committee or the full House, JIM GIBBONS brought a special insight to our committee. He also brought a great love for the National Guard and has been a great and powerful advocate for them. I know he is going to continue to do that in his new role. But JIM GIBBONS, like JOEL HEFLEY, is one of those quality guys that you just enjoy working with and you know when he comes to the job every day, he cares about the service, he cares about the people that wear the uniform.

There is a real joy in working on this committee, Mr. Speaker, and those gentlemen are people that every one in this House likes to work with and understands the value added that they bring every time they walk into this Chamber or into the committee room. So our many, many thanks to them.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to listen to my great colleague, who had a great taste in coats today because we came with exactly the same outfits here. Mr. SKELTON, the fine gentleman from Missouri, has done a wonderful job working on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to thank my friend from California for being such a gentleman and for his courtesy not just this year but through the years. We appreciate it very, very much and also his very thoughtful words a moment ago. Mr. Speaker, we thank DUNCAN HUNTER very much.

Leaving us is LANE EVANS, a gentleman who was a marine and served here and is on the top row of our committee, ranking member for so long for the Veterans' Affairs Committee; and we say a fond farewell to him and thank him for his excellent service to the Nation.

JOEL HEFLEY, who, as the chairman has spoken so well of, has been such a good friend to all through the years. JIM GIBBONS, who is going into other political pursuits, we certainly wish him well. Dr. SCHWARZ, CYNTHIA MCKINNEY also will not be coming back. We wish them Godspeed in the days ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the National Defense Authorization Act. It is, as you may know, named in honor of Senator JOHN WARNER, who is for the last time, under the rules of the Senate, chairing the Armed Services Committee. We thank him for his accomplishments with the Armed Services Committee as chairman. He is responsible in large measure for many of the compromises that were allowed under this bill.

This is a good bill. It is good for America. It is good for the troops. It deserves our support. This wartime bill authorizes a total of $462.9 billion and, as was mentioned by the chairman a few moments ago, $70 billion authorization for a bridge fund supplemental, of which $20 billion is for the reset of the equipment lost or damaged in operations overseas.

As many have heard me speak, I am terribly concerned about the readiness of our ground forces, our Army, our Marines; and this bill provides the critically needed downpayment to begin to set things right.

Under the testimony of General Schoomaker, it is not only for the Army, some $17 billion needed this year, but 12 billion reset dollars for over the next several years apiece. And we know the Army and Marine Corps equipment is wearing out, and we do know that some units are coming back to little or no equipment whatsoever. That has a serious readiness challenge, particularly in the Army and the Marines. Our ground forces must be, in the days and years ahead, prepared to deal with sustained deployment not just in Iraq and Afghanistan but who knows what the future will hold.

I have been blessed, Mr. Speaker, to represent the Fourth District of Missouri. This is my 30th year here in Congress. And during that 30 years, there have been 12 engagements in which American forces have been either deployed or used, some minor, some major. And if the future is anything like the past, we will have times when our forces will need to be prepared to be called on, to be used, if nothing else, to deter aggression or adventurism in the years ahead by other countries. And it is a serious matter to make sure that the reset comes to pass and that the readiness is corrected.

Of course, the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan demand our immediate attention, but we cannot afford to lose sight of other security challenges that loom across the road.

We are getting seven new ships for the Navy and recommend some $400 million for advanced procurement of a second VA-class submarine. We have a multiyear procurement contract for the F–22, and other aircraft is on the books for us to authorize and build.

I am most pleased about what the bill does for our magnificent men and women in the Armed Forces and their families. The end strength for the Army and Marines has increased by 30,000 and 5,000, for the Army and Marines respectively. In addition, this year we are able to enact an initiative

first proposed by the gentleman from Mississippi, GENE TAYLOR. This conference report expands the TRICARE Reserve Select to members of the Selected Reserves and terminates the current three-tier eligibility program. I am also particularly glad to note that there is a 1-year moratorium on increases on TRICARE and pharmacy fees. I had offered a similar amendment in committee, and I am pleased that that was included in the final product.

I am proud to say that we are able to provide our servicemembers with a well-deserved 2.2 percent pay raise and a targeted pay raise for those midgrade and senior noncommissioned officers and warrant officers who truly are the backbone of our military.

These are just a few examples of why this is a critical bill at this critical time.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said about Iraq. Much has been said about the fight against terrorism, which has the genesis in Afghanistan. But the bright spot in all of this is the young man and young woman who wear the American uniform. There is no way for us to say as eloquently as we should thank you for your service. And a special note of gratitude for the families of the young men and young women in uniform, to be called on for a year, one, two, three, and in some cases I know some SEALs that have been deployed four times for 7 months at a time. And there is no way really to say thank you well enough to the families that endure this: the spouses; the children; and in some cases, yes, the grandchildren, for which the chairman and I share a mutual interest.

So let this bill be a tribute to their service, a thank you for their service, and a warm note of appreciation to the spouses and children of those magnificent warriors wearing the American uniform.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to yield 8 minutes to the chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee, Mr. HEFLEY, the gentleman who is departing after 18 years of great service on this committee.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 5122, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007.

And I would like to thank the chairman of this committee and the ranking member of the committee both. You have earned your pay all the way through, but particularly in the last few weeks as we have struggled to get this conference report through and actually bring this bill to the floor; and I appreciate the yeomen effort that both of you have put in.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield on that point?

Mr. HEFLEY. I don't know if I should, but I guess I will.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. HEFLEY, I appreciate that. Let me just say the fact that we were able to bring this bill to the floor and do as much work as we did on it, as big as it is and as comprehensive as it is and with so many people dependent on it and at the same time do the bill that will allow us to prosecute terrorists, do all that, that was largely a product of this tremendous staff, this wonderful bipartisan staff that we have on the Armed Services Committee.

□ 1645

They have done a fabulous job, and that is why we are able to juggle these two important challenges at the same time. They are great, great people, and what professionals, and also people who can work very effectively when they have been up for 24 hours. That has always astounded me, frankly, but they have done a great job, and I think they deserve a lot of thanks from this committee.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HEFLEY. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. HEFLEY, I am sure the chairman will yield you some more time.

Let me start off by associating myself, as I know all of us do, with the comments of the esteemed chairman.

But, Mr. Chairman, I know you would agree with me that it is appropriate to recognize that, after so many years of loyal and dedicated service to the House Armed Services Committee, this is Subcommittee Chairman HEFLEY's final authorization bill.

He has been a lion in defense of the men and women in uniform. He has a been a guiding light to more junior 14-year Members such as myself. I just wanted to let the record show how much we are going to miss him and how much we all appreciate the great service he has provided to this committee, to the people of this country, and, most importantly, to the men and women in uniform of the United States of America. Thank you, JOEL.

Mr. HEFLEY. Thank you, Mr. MCHUGH. I appreciate that very much and the kind words Mr. SKELTON said earlier.

You know, there is a lot that I am going to miss about Congress; and more than anything else is my service on this committee. Because you felt every day you were working on this committee that you were doing something worthwhile, something that was important for America. I am so privileged to have done this with the wonderful people that are on the committee and also on the staff. We do have an absolutely outstanding staff that we are very proud of.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HEFLEY. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. I really want to say a special personal thanks to you for the tremendous work you have done on our committee and in working with me in particular for helping Whiteman Air Force Base, Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, be what it is. I would be remiss if I did not just say a special note of gratitude to you, JOEL HEFLEY.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. SKELTON, thank you so much. You have been such a good friend over the years.

And I also would be remiss if I did not thank Mr. ORTIZ, SOLOMON ORTIZ. He and I have been teammates leading the Readiness Committee but before that leading the Military Construction Committee.

I would guess that we have agreed on 95 percent or more of everything we have dealt with during this period of time. In fact, I can't think of anything, SOLOMON, that we have not agreed on, but there might have been something. But, obviously, if we did not agree, we disagreed in a professional, pleasant, friendly way and moved on to try to do what is best for our troops and for the defense of this country. SOLOMON, I cannot tell you how much I appreciate you.

Mr. Speaker, you know, despite 5 years of demanding combat operations, our Nation's military remains the most effective, most powerful, most ready force in the world. However, it comes as no surprise that the wear and tear of the years of wartime activities have resulted in increased funding requirements for training, operations, equipment and maintenance.

Recognizing this, the Readiness Subcommittee has conducted rigorous oversight on military readiness through hearings, classified briefings, and visits with military personnel in the field. Our oversight efforts led the committee to include in this conference report both funding and policy actions intended to further enhance the readiness of our military forces.

The most striking example is the inclusion of nearly $24 billion within the supplemental budget accounts for the repair, modernization, and replacement of equipment damaged or destroyed in Iraq and Afghanistan. This money will satisfy all past and current reset requirements of the Army and Marine Corps.

I suspect, Mr. HUNTER, you have probably already mentioned this, but this is the high point of our bill. This is so important.

The conference report also includes important policy initiatives that will improve readiness and allow Congress to better monitor readiness-related developments within the services, such as:

A requirement that the Secretary of Defense fully fund equipment reset for all of the services, equipment for Army mobility, modality, and Army prepositioned stocks;

A requirement for the Department of Defense to create a uniform strategy policy for the prepositioning of materiel and equipment; and

A mandate for continued capital investment into our depot maintenance facilities.

In addition to such efforts, this conference report also authorizes more than $13 billion for military construction projects, more than $4 billion for family housing, and $5.6 billion for implementation of the 2005 base closure rounds. These funds are critical for both quality of life and military readiness.

I would like to add here that I hope we will not use these base closure moneys to do other things, because it is important if we are going to do base closure procedures that we do it and we get these properties back into some useful use.

In conclusion, this conference report provides the necessary funding and policy changes to improve our Nation's military readiness. I urge my colleagues to support the conference report for this very important bill.

You know, in 20 years that I have been here, Mr. SKELTON, I am not proud of everything we have done. I am proud of some things we have done, but I am not proud of everything we have done. But I can tell you I am very proud of this bill. It is a good bill, as you said and as Mr. HUNTER said. We need to support it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

Mr. SPRATT. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support and to praise the chairman and the ranking member for their efforts in bringing this bill to fruition this fall, rather than Christmas Eve, as was our experience last year.

There may be some questions as to whether or not it is worth it, to have two committees process a bill of this magnitude, an authorization process and an appropriations process. But in addition to having a second scrub of a $462 billion bill, that double, two-part process also leads to some positive provisions from each mark. Let me just highlight a couple to show you some of the valuable features in this bill.

A couple of years ago, we became concerned about the level of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance. We increased the amount of coverage from $250,000 to $400,000.

I offered an amendment to pay for the full premium for those troops that go into a combat zone and hazardous duty zones. That did not pass, but we did pass a provision that $150,000 of the increased coverage would be paid for. This bill takes it a step further, as it should.

What we are saying in this bill is that the full $400,000 in life insurance coverage in the combat zone will be paid for in full when you enter the combat zone. This is the least we can do for those who put their lives on the line for our country. The least we can do is to make sure that their family and loved ones should be taken care of in this manner if the worst should happen to them.

Second, nonproliferation is a major concern, big defense risk. In this particular bill, we plussed-up the President's budget for the megaports bill by $15 million, and we added $20 million to the Global Threat Initiative. This additional funding will allow for the installation of additional radiation detectors at the world's major border crossings and ports and help secure and dispose of nuclear material in some of the most vulnerable research reactors around the globe.

Finally, one of the things we did not do was to endorse the authorization for space-based missile defense weapons. I have always had great concerns about the efficacy. This bill says to ballistic defense: Before you undertake this program, make sure it works, what its scope is, what its strategic implications are.

And, finally, we right and timely put in this bill $23.7 billion to reset the capital assets of the Marine Corps and the Army. And this is an illustration of a cost that is going to be staring us in the face for years to come as we try also to fund transformation and modernization.

We will have to pay this expense just to keep standing still, another reason we needed a bill of this magnitude, $462 billion, to defend the country. I commend the leadership of this committee for bringing this bill to fruition.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE).

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, predatory lending practices have become a major concern in areas surrounding military installations. This is of particular concern in the Second District of Virginia, with a very high number of payday lenders. Interest rates on these loans have been recorded as high as 780 percent.

Many young servicemembers attempt to climb out of debt by adding additional debt on top of debt, which quickly becomes unmanageable. Lenders add to this by encouraging extensions of the loan through refinancing.

This type of predatory lending leads to multiple issues, chief among them the loss of a security clearance. A military member lost in uncontrollable debt could be a security risk, and clearances are often revoked. This represents a national security issue.

Additionally, this represents a morale issue. Individuals have a tendency to concentrate less on their jobs when they are mired in uncontrollable debt. When servicemembers are concentrating less on their mission and more on their debt, it affects readiness.

To safeguard servicemembers, the conference report prohibits creditors from rolling over loan balances, charging annual percentage rates that are higher than 36 percent, including fees, and it prohibits the borrower from prepaying the loan or charging the borrower a fee for prepayment.

This is a fairness issue. It has been a grave concern to our military commanders. I would like to commend our chairman, our ranking member and our committee for their concern for this issue.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Mrs. DRAKE. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

You know, we went into this thing. I thank her for all of the great work that she did and lots of other Members who really worked this hard. I know Mr. DAVIS brought some important elements to this package.

We wanted to have a package that would make the sergeant majors who saw their kids going out and paying massive loan fees trying to pay off their loan, they could not pay it off, having the loan rolled over, and then seeing higher and higher fees stacked on top of that. In fact, I think it was Mr. DAVIS' provision that barred the roll-overs.

We want to see those sergeant majors see a bill come out of our committee and out of conference that, as I said, would make them throw their hats in the air and shout: Hooray, Congress has done what it took for our kids.

And we kept them apprised, as we moved this conference report along, as the gentlewoman knows in working on the team, to protect our people. And when we showed them the product, they threw their hats in the air, and they yelled hooray, and they felt like it was a good product.

You know, the other thing we have got to do is we have got to get these credit unions that are in the base, the guys in the institutions we allow to be inside the perimeter of that base, to reach out and establish short-term loans for our servicemembers so servicemembers go there instead of feeling they have got to go a to a loan shark to get that loan.

I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership and her great work on this.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ), the ranking member on Readiness.

□ 1700

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the bill. I want to thank Chairman HUNTER and Mr. SKELTON for their skills and leadership in addressing the military issues before us today.

I want to thank Chairman HEFLEY for your friendship, for your leadership and for so many years you and I have worked together. I will always remember the good that you have done for this country and for those young men and women who are in harm's way. I know that you are too young to retire, but I wish you the best in whatever you do, and we are going to miss you around here.

This bill provides, in some measure, for the needs of our troops and their families. One of the most important parts of this bill is the attention given to the immediate readiness needs of our men and women in uniform.

The bill takes some action to address the shortfalls in operations, training and maintenance funding that the Department of Defense failed to address in their budget submission.

Now we have taken care of our most immediate readiness need, although we have long-term needs we have not yet begun to address, but I can tell you this is a very, very good beginning.

When we come back to this in the next Congress, again after we recess, we need to particularly address the lack of equipment for the National Guard and for the Reserves. The National Guard and Reserves have been as busy as the active duty military in Iraq and Afghanistan, and they need to be considered equal in status with the other partners in our fighting efforts.

The equipment shortfalls for the National Guard mean we will be unable to respond as we need to do in the next natural disaster, or God forbid, another war.

I thank Chairman HUNTER, Chairman HEFLEY for their outstanding work, but I want to thank my ranking member, IKE SKELTON, the top Democrat on the committee whose outstanding leadership has gone a long way to address the many shortfalls in our defense budget, while balancing the need for our military to remain the world's premier fighting force.

So I ask my friends, my colleagues to support this bill. It includes $130 billion in O&M funding to operate the military, $17 billion funding for the military construction, and an additional $20 billion added to the bridge funding to help offset some of the immediate needs of the Army and the Marine Corps.

This is a good bill. I want to thank the staff as well for doing a great job.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Upstate New York (Mr. MCHUGH), who works absolutely tirelessly as chairman of our Personnel Subcommittee.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great bill and it is a great bill given the times we live in, the challenges that our men and women in uniform and their families face in, frankly, the economic environment in which we find ourselves.

I know my ranking member Vic Snyder with whom I worked so closely, he and I both feel a great deal of pride year after year that when a majority of Members of this House will speak kindly about this bill, which they will, they will refer to many of the provisions in the personnel mark.

We owe thanks to the chairman, DUNCAN HUNTER, and to the ranking member for allowing us to have the opportunity to try to do better by the most important part of a great military, the most important part of the greatest military the world has ever seen, that of the United States of America; and I know, Mr. Speaker, many that have gone before and others that will follow have talked about the terrific things in this bill, the 2.2 percent pay increase that diminishes that gap between military and pay that had existed down to 4 percent from a high of about 14 percent.

We increase end strength, adding tens of thousands of soldiers into the Army and the Marine Corps to lessen the pace of deployments and the operations tempo.

Most importantly, in my judgment, at a time of war, when our men and women in uniform are sacrificing, when we have made commitments to our veterans, we rejected to the tune of $486 million, that the conferees had to find the increases proposed by the Department of Defense to the military health care system in both the TRICARE program, as well as the pharmacy program. None of those increases will occur.

I also want to add my words of thanks, indeed, to the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE) and to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS) for their work in ending the scourge of predatory payday lenders who get rich on the backs of the men and women in uniform and their families.

This is a terrific mark from top to bottom; but we are particularly proud of the personnel marks, and I would hope all of our colleagues would vote in support of this legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished gentleman from El Paso, Texas (Mr. REYES), who is also the ranking member of the Strategic Subcommittee on the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I rise in support of this conference report on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007.

I want to thank our chairman, Chairman HUNTER, and our ranking member, Ike Skelton, the staff on both sides. So many people have put in so much effort and a lot of work on this bill that supports our men and women in uniform.

While I might have preferred a more inclusive process, taken as a whole, the product is worthy of everyone's support in this House. It provides our troops with tools and support that they need to defend our Nation at a time of war.

I am particularly pleased that the final legislation does not include language that linked funding for the Army's Future Combat System with the critical need to replace and repair equipment that has been lost or damaged in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the ranking member of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, I am also pleased to report that the final bill before us today contains bipartisan compromises on the issues within our jurisdiction. The Strategic Forces Subcommittee has oversight of numerous complex and contentious programs, including ballistic missile defense, space systems and nuclear weapons.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize and thank our subcommittee chairman, my good friend from Alabama, Chairman Everett, for his leadership and the tremendous amount of effort that he put into forging a bipartisan effort to agree on these very complex and controversial issues at times.

In the short time that I have, I want to highlight elements of the conference report on ballistic missile defense systems.

The conferees adopted a Senate provision establishing U.S. policy on ballistic missile defense that clearly reflects our views. It says that we should accord greater priority within the program to effective near-term missile defense capabilities, including the ground-based midcourse defense system, the Aegis ballistic missile defense system, the Patriot PAC–3 system, the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, and the sensors necessary to support such systems.

The conferees also adopted the House provision preventing use of funds for testing or deployment of a space-based missile defense interceptor.

Mr. Speaker, while time does not permit me to describe in detail the rest of our subcommittee's accomplishments, I again want to thank Chairman EVERETT and our Senate colleagues for their cooperation in achieving this bipartisan, successful measure; and I want to recommend to all our colleagues that they vote ''yes'' on this very important legislation to support our troops and their families.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS), a great member of our committee and a distinguished Vietnam War veteran.

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, I thank the Chair, and I rise in support of the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007, which is a bill that brings good news to our men and women in uniform and especially good news for the U.S. submarine force and to the American shipbuilding industry.

The conference report before us contains $400 million in spending authorization to begin the construction of two fast attack submarines in the year 2009 and also expresses a sense of the Congress that the attack submarine force should not drop below 48, the stated requirement of the U.S. Navy to meet its critical missions.

Because of submarine shortfalls, the Navy is on track to meet only 54 percent of the submarine mission days requested by the U.S. combatant commanders. We need to do better than 54 percent. This legislation puts us in the right direction of doing better, and we will do better.

My colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee understand this reality, and I would especially like to thank subcommittee chairman, ROSCOE BARTLETT from Maryland, and the ranking member, GENE TAYLOR from Mississippi. These two gentlemen probably have more knowledge about American and global shipbuilding than anyone else in the Congress. I would also

like to thank my colleague from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN), who for the last 4 years has worked with me in a bipartisan fashion on these issues and is the co-chair with me on the Congressional Submarine Caucus.

Finally, I want to thank Ranking Member IKE SKELTON who works in such a fine bipartisan fashion and our chairman, DUNCAN HUNTER, who comes from the city of San Diego with a great shipbuilding tradition and who has also visited my part of Connecticut. We have a shipbuilding tradition as well right in Connecticut, the submarine capital of the world. That is what we call it.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SIMMONS. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

I just want to thank the champion of Groton for his hard work and all the work that he and Mr. LANGEVIN, and as you said, Mr. TAYLOR and Mr. BARTLETT, have done. I want to thank all of them for their great work and also to the gentleman for his hard work on payday lender and trying to make sure that our troops have a good situation now and will not be the victims of loan sharks and what to do on that.

You have brought a real insight to undersea warfare that has been important to us and especially in a Taiwan scenario or another type of scenario in the future which could be very, very critical to American sea power.

I thank the gentleman.

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. In concluding, he referred to his $89 a month and the loan sharks. When I was in as a private, I made $68 a month. The loan sharks were out there. So the legislation to get them off the backs of our soldiers is welcome news.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the hardworking gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN), a member of the Projection and Terrorism Subcommittee.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Before I begin, I just wanted to recognize and commend the great service of my friend and colleague, Congressman HEFLEY, and I have so enjoyed serving with you in a number of capacities, particularly in our work in the Armed Services Committee. We had an opportunity to work on several important issues, and I thank you for being such a gentleman and giving such great service to this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5122 and thank Chairman HUNTER and Ranking Member SKELTON for their hard work.

The bill helps our servicemembers and their families, as well as military retirees. It includes a 2.2 percent pay increase for military personnel and much-needed increases to end-strength numbers. It places a 1-year moratorium on cost increase for the TRICARE pharmacy benefit and expands TRICARE eligibility for Reservists, two very important issues to my constituents.

I am particularly pleased that H.R. 5122 recommends $400 million to expedite the construction schedule for the Virginia-class submarine so that we can start building two per year as early as 2009. I commend the great work of my friend Congressman SIMMONS and his leadership on this issue. He is a great partner in this effort. The Navy's current shipbuilding plan would have our submarine fleet drop to dangerously low levels, and this bill understands we cannot allow that to happen.

I thank the committee for its leadership in its efforts, all of the staff and all of my colleagues on the committee for their efforts to accomplish these important goals, and I encourage my colleagues to support the measure.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. EVERETT), who is chairman of our Strategic Forces Subcommittee.

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much. We are going to miss Mr. HEFLEY. We still have some unfinished business between us that I am going to hold him to.

I want to recognize also the gentleman from California, my long-time friend, the chairman of the committee. I do not think in the 14 years I have been here that I have had the privilege to serve with anyone who has the patience that he has had. He has a great skill in leading this committee, and he mentioned earlier in his opening remarks about the fact that this committee works so hard, and it does. The members take very seriously what they are doing.

I had the great privilege, along with Mr. MCHUGH, of being the first Members of Congress into Baghdad after we invaded, and I just appreciate his outstanding leadership and his dedication to the fighting men and women of our country.

□ 1715

And also the gentleman from Missouri, who has the same type dedication, and who knows that he is welcome back to Dauphin, Alabama, any time he wants to. It has only been about 40 years since he has been there.

I do support the conference committee, the National Defense Authorization Act, H.R. 5122. It supports the administration's objectives, while significantly improving the budget request.

Moreover, our national security investment must continue to develop transformation capabilities of future systems, and this conference report does that.

Finally, let me also say that my subcommittee, the one that I head, Strategic Forces, simply would not have been able to work like it did in a very bipartisan manner if it had not been for my good friend, Mr. REYES of California. Much of what we have been able to do has been on a bipartisan basis, as he had mentioned earlier, on very complex, contentious issues, perhaps some of the most contentious issues in the committee. We were able to reach a consensus that would serve the best interests of the Nation and of our fighting troops, and I again thank him for his efforts as well as the other committee members who oftentimes had different views. But we all came together.

We also have an outstanding staff who has to study these very complex issues to see if we can't come to an accord that is in the best interest of the Nation.

So, again, I recommend supporting the final version of this bill.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the very distinguished gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER), the ranking member on the Personnel Subcommittee.

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman; and I rise in support of this bill. I think this bill has a lot of good things in it for our troops, and I appreciate all the work Members on both sides of the aisle have done.

I want to mention two or three things that I think we need to work on and maybe we can work on in the future.

First of all, Mr. MCHUGH and I participated in a joint hearing yesterday with Mr. BOOZMAN, from one of the Veterans Committee's subcommittees, and Ms. HERSETH, the ranking member; and we had a really good hearing on the GI bill.

The GI bill has challenges. We have problems now in that the GI bill program for folks in the Active component is a different program than for those in the Reserve component, the folks in the Army Reserves and the National Guard. What has happened as the years have gone by it has become a really terribly unfair program for our folks in the Reserve component, and for the folks in the Active component, the cost of going to school gets higher and higher.

So we had a good hearing yesterday. I hope that this joint hearing between the Veterans Committee and the Armed Services Committee will continue but with the ultimate result being we make a change in some of the issues in the GI bill.

One provision I wished had been accepted, Senator LINCOLN had inserted on the Senate side, dealt with what I think is just unconscionable, and that is the way we treat members of the Reserve who are activated in the GI bill. The way the system currently works is if they get activated, let's say activated to go to Iraq, 14, 15 months, and then get out. So here they have been in a war zone for a year, their enlistment ends, and once the enlistment ends, they get zero educational benefit. Zero educational benefit.

Now the administration says that helps retention. But the retention

numbers are good. That, to me, is terribly unfair, and we need to do a better job on that.

Another provision I wish that we would either do in the defense bill or as a stand-alone provision is what Senator Truman did during World War II. We need something comparable to the Truman Commission to deal with the waste of billions and billions of dollars and the dissatisfaction of American taxpayers with how the dollars have been spent on reconstruction projects in Iraq.

A third point I would make, and I made it before, is I really hope, we have tried it now 10 years without the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, and in my view that has been to the great detriment of the American people, the American taxpayer, and our men and women in uniform. So I hope we will bring back the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations to the House Armed Services Committee.

I recommend everyone support this bill, and thank you to Chairman HUNTER and Mr. SKELTON for the work they have done on this bill.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT), who is chairman of the Projection Forces Subcommittee.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Chairman HUNTER and Ranking Member SKELTON for their exemplary leadership in bringing this conference report.

I also want to thank my subcommittee ranking member, Mr. TAYLOR, for his tireless efforts and dedication in the preparation of this important legislation. I am grateful for our strong and cooperative relationship.

In addition, I would like to recognize my fellow colleagues on the subcommittee for their diligence and commitment to a job well done.

The intense work involved in preparing this conference report before us has been accomplished with the assistance of our professional and hard-working staff, and I commend their efforts and the quality of the final product. Staff, thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this conference report. It strikes an appropriate balance between modernizing and maintaining our existing weapon systems, while investing in replacement capabilities for our future force.

In this bill, we move forward with the development of our future fleet by funding the lead replacement amphibious assault ship and the dual lead DDG–1000 destroyers, while also providing advance procurement funds for the next generation aircraft carrier. The bill also continues to build-out our fleet of *Virginia* class attack submarines, *San Antonio* class amphibious ships and Littoral Combat Ships. This conference report also contains funds for continuing the refueling and complex overhaul of the USS *Carl Vinson* and provides funds for the modernization of the *Arleigh Burke* destroyer and the Air Force's fleet of strategic airlift and bomber aircraft.

We have taken action to provide our future force with the capabilities they need to meet future threats. We have also taken steps to ensure that the current capabilities are not retired prematurely. This conference report mandates the Department of Defense maintain a minimum strategic airlift force structure of 299 aircraft and allows limited retirements of KC–135E aerial refueling aircraft and B–2 bombers.

One point of concern deals with the submarine force for the future. It is destined to go back to 40 submarines. It is the strong sense of this subcommittee that it ought to go no lower than 48 submarines.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting our sailors, our airmen, our soldiers and marines by voting ''yes'' for the fiscal year 2006 National Defense Authorization Act.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, may I make an inquiry as to the time remaining for each side, please?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Missouri has 10½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Colorado has 3½ minutes remaining.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Members have the right to revise and extend their remarks this evening.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), who is the ranking member of the Projection Subcommittee, a true friend of those who wear the uniform of our country.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman SKELTON, the ranking member, and Chairman HUNTER for the great work they have done.

I also want to thank Lieutenant Commander Kevin Aanestad, who the Navy was nice enough to let work in my office for a year. Just a while back Kevin was flying combat missions in Iraq. He has been assigned to this office, as was last year Captain Randy Edwards, and let us not forget that that is what this bill is all about. It is for the Kevins, the Randys and the people serving in Iraq now, the people who have been there, and the people who are going there.

I want to thank Chairman BARTLETT for the great work he has done on the dual-lead strategy for the DDX. I think the DDGs have served our Nation very well, but it is time to move on to another platform, and it is great we are finally getting started on that.

I want to thank Chairman MCHUGH for including TRICARE for guardsmen and reservists in this bill. It was kind of a contentious vote last year. I wish we could have prevailed last year, but the good news is it is going to happen this year. Our guardsmen and reservists are called upon increasingly to serve our Nation.

At the time I made my pitch on the floor, 40 percent of the all people serving in Iraq were guardsmen or reservists. Since I made that pitch, we actually lost, I regret to say, a young National Guardsman by the name of Josh Russell. He died the night of Hurricane Katrina on a search and rescue mission only 30 miles from his home.

They deserve the same benefits as the Active Duty force. If we are going to use them the same as the Active Duty force, then it is a great thing that this bill is going to give them the same health care benefits.

The only disappointment I would like to express, Mr. Speaker, is, number one, I want to thank Chairman HUNTER and thank Ranking Member SKELTON for including language in the bill that would have provided an IED jammer on every vehicle in Iraq. If you look, as I do, at the casualty reports in the paper, you will see on a daily basis that young men and women are dying in Iraq as a result of an improvised explosive device exploding near their vehicle. Over half of all the casualties in Iraq are the result of IEDs, improvised explosive devices.

We can jam that signal most of the time. And it is not a parochial thing. These devices are made nowhere near south Mississippi. But what they will do is save the lives of south Mississippians and Marylanders and people from California and people from Missouri. So I deeply regret that the Senate would not agree with us on this provision.

They did, however, include a provision that every vehicle has some sort of coverage. But, again, in the chaos of combat, I think our Nation would be better served if every single vehicle had this provision; and I want to put my colleagues on notice that it is something we need to work on again next year.

So, again, I want to thank Chairman BARTLETT for his great cooperation. JOEL HEFLEY, you are one of the classiest acts that has ever served in the United States Congress. Thank you for your service. Chairman HUNTER, Ranking Member SKELTON, thank you very much for your help on this bill.

I want to thank Chairman HUNTER and Ranking Member SKELTON, as well as Chairman WARNER and Ranking Member LEVIN, for their work on this Conference Report. They have done an outstanding job making this a truly bipartisan effort. As always, Chairman BARTLETT and the Projection Forces staff have done a tremendous job crafting our Subcommittee's section of the bill. He has gone out of his way to ensure that this is a bipartisan effort, with provisions that make fiscally responsible decisions. I thank the Chairman for his leadership and for his consideration, even on issues on which our views differ. I strongly support the provisions in the Projection Forces portion of this bill.

I would like to thank the Chairman and Ranking Member for the compromise reached on the "dual lead ship" strategy for DDG I000

this year. Last year we in Congress required the Navy and the shipbuilding industry to use both surface combatant shipyards to build the DD(X), the Navy complied, and this bill follows through on that and allows us to be consistent in our direction to the department. The bill allows work to begin on a total of 7 new ships, with advanced procurement for an eighth—a good start towards reversing the decade long decline of our surface fleet.

The theme of fiscally conservative decision-making while maintaining the robust force structure our military requires is maintained throughout the Projection Forces section of this bill. From maintaining our strategic airlift capability with the addition of 10 more G–17s (for a total of 22), to allowing the retirement of only those KC–135s and B–52s that are the most expensive to maintain. It applies cost caps on future aircraft carriers and amphibious ships, and requires that future proposals for all surface ships include options for alternative propulsion sources such as nuclear power to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. I am extremely pleased to support the Projection Forces section of this bill.

I would like to express my appreciation as well for finally including the expansion of TRICARE coverage to members of the National Guard and Reserve. I want to commend all of my colleagues. In particular, I want to commend and remember a former colleague, the late Sonny Montgomery. I think Sonny would be very pleased that we are providing our Nation's Guardsmen and Reservists with TRICARE benefits. It is long overdue and I want to thank the chairman of the subcommittee, Chairman MCHUGH, and all the other people who helped make this happen. Providing this health coverage recognizes the sacrifices our Guard and Reserve troops are making every day. Insurgents in Iraq don't differentiate between reserve soldiers and active duty soldiers.

Lastly, I would like to express my disappointment in a compromise that weakened my provision to require IED jammers on all of our wheeled military vehicles at risk in Iraq and Afghanistan. This threat is responsible for over half of the casualties in the war. I realize jammers are not a 100 percent solution, but they are proven and known to be effective. This is not the last conflict in which our military personnel will face this threat, every potential enemy in the world is watching and learning from our current conflict. Our British and Australian allies require and provide a jammer on every vehicle; we should be ashamed that we don't do the same.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member SKELTON, I thank you and your staff again for the work you've done on this bill, and for your thoughtful insight and leadership in creating an overall extremely balanced measure that I am proud to support.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, good things happen and we Members, of course, often take the credit, but truthfully the staff does so much work. We would be at a loss without them, so a special thanks to all of our staff.

And it is special to note that Betty Gray of the Armed Services staff is now completing 30 years of service on our Armed Services staff. So a special thanks to her for her dedication.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Long Island, New York (Mr. ISRAEL), who belongs to the Tactical Air and Projection Subcommittee and who has taken a great interest in professional military education.

Mr. ISRAEL. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, all of us can celebrate this conference report and the support that it provides to our troops. It is a good product, and we have had some hard-fought differences on various issues.

For me, we have been grappling with the proper balance between religious expression and tolerance in the military. I am very pleased that this conference report struck language that in my view would have made it easier to engage in certain practices by overturning existing DOD standards on tolerance of all faiths. And I thank my ranking member, Mr. SKELTON, and I thank Senators WARNER and LEVIN of the other body, the Department of Defense, and many, many different religious organizations, from the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, to the American Jewish Committee and so many others. They understand this is not just an issue of tolerance, Mr. Speaker, it is an issue of good order and discipline and unit cohesion.

We maintain the overall language requiring respect of all religious faiths, but this language does reopen a loophole, a loophole that allowed commanders and chaplains at the Air Force Academy to chastise cadets for not attending certain religious services, a loophole that allowed one chaplain to tell cadets of all faiths that some of them would burn in the eternal flames of hell for not following his faith. So we still have some work to do, and we still have some good-faith discussions ahead of us.

And I want to take this opportunity to say something to my friends on the other side of the aisle and on the other side of this issue, people who I respect and admire a great deal. I want to continue working with them. I have been troubled by the occasional rhetorical excess that has suggested, because I am opposed to proselytizing of any specific religion on any military base, I am somehow trying to stop people from invoking the name of Jesus in their prayers.

Nothing could be further from the truth. People should be able to pray how they want, when they want, where they want, and to whom they want. They just can't compel others to join them.

For those of you who truly believe that the chaplain who told cadets willing to die in the defense of freedom that after they died they would burn in the eternal flames of hell, well, you and I have some profound differences on that issue. So profound that I don't think the issue should be decided in 3 weeks of discussion in a House-Senate conference. It ought to be put before the American people in hearings.

And I want to close, Mr. Speaker, by suggesting that, as we move forward in trying to resolve this issue, we all rededicate ourselves to the spirit of openness, sensitivity, tolerance, and respect. And don't take my word for it, Mr. Speaker, because behind me, carved into this wood dais on the floor of the United States House of Representatives, is the word ''tolerance,'' right in the center. That word must remain with us. My speech will come and go. This word will always stay. That is what makes our military great. That is what makes our country worth fighting for.

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Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I want my colleagues here to know that my comments have nothing to do with a lack of appreciation for your efforts on this bill, but rather relate to some institutional and historic concerns that I have.

The U.S. can spend tens of billions of dollars less and do a far better job of protecting our Nation. The defense-industrial complex follows a misguided strategy of buying weapons that provide Americans with no increased safety; buying ever more expensive fighter jets, massive naval ships, and a missile defense system that provides no additional protection for our Nation. There are no fighter jets or naval ships that can challenge our Air Force or our Navy.

Furthermore, the claimed ballistic missile threat is grossly overexaggerated. Terrorists do not possess ballistic missiles and the few nation states that do have no desire to face the understood retaliation of our ballistic missiles.

This defense-industrial complex wrongly believes that the $270 million F–22 fighter is an important new weapon system. However, the current F–15 remains unchallenged and inexpensive upgrades can keep our Air Force supreme. The F–22 cannot bomb away the beliefs of a small number of radical fighters.

The advocates of advanced weapons systems fail to understand these new systems do not match up an effective defense capability with the terrorist threats. Only a new approach to foreign policy can effectively mitigate the terrorist threat.

We need to provide for the traditional sense of security by first ensuring economic security, health security, and job security for all. The roots of terrorism begin not in hatred, but in desperation. All people, no matter their ethnicity, seek the basic necessities such as food, clothes, shelter, good health, and the ability to earn a decent living. If you can level this playing field, there is no desperation that may potentially evolve into radical hatred.

I will support a defense budget that matches real threats to our security with appropriate defensive measures. In the long term, the federal budget needs a fresh look at our foreign policy, that promotes an economic stability worldwide, thereby eliminating the true roots of terrorism, desperation.

IRAQ

The ever-rising cost of our military is not sustainable. This year Congress has handed over to the Pentagon over $400 billion, including $70 billion in ''bridge funding'' to support ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. But don't be fooled by this massive number. The Administration will be back before the end of the fiscal year seeking more funding for continuing operation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Of the numerous reasons to vote against this bill, the continued funding for the war in Iraq is especially absurd. If the U.S. were to withdrawn as soon as possible out of Iraq, we'd save $1.5 billion each week in Iraq, $6 billion a month and $72 billion annually. For every $1 spent on war costs, we are taking $1 away from U.S. entitlement programs.

It is increasingly clear that this Administration's occupation and reconstruction of Iraq has failed.

After three and half years, Iraq is less safe, not more; Al Qaeda, which prior to the U.S. invasion had no influence, has now grown in influence and number of recruits. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, this Administration's policies has turned Iraq into a breeding and training grounds for terrorists, and created the greatest recruiting tool ever for al Qaeda. Even the National Intelligence Estimate suggests the invasion of Iraq has evolved into our largest terrorist threat.

But, Mr. Speaker, the greatest tragedy of this war is the 2,669 American soldiers that have been irrevocably lost, and tens of thousands more injured. Between 100,000 and 200,000 innocent Iraqis have died as a result of the U.S. invasion. Everyday, 120 more Iraqis die at the hands of execution-style death squads, kidnappings, murders, IEDs, and sectarian violence.

The war in Iraq has been a grave and tragic mistake. It has cost us in blood and treasure. It has damaged our once unchallenged reputation in the world. It has squandered the good will rained upon this nation after 9/11 and has been a distraction from our efforts to root out terrorism worldwide and bring to justice for those responsible for 9/11.

The President's promise that we would not leave Iraq until after his Presidency will only compound past failures and make our nation less safe.

Our continued occupation of Iraq is not only counterproductive, but fuels the civil war.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is time we end this grave misadventure in Iraq and bring our troops home with the honor and dignity they deserve.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished ranking member, I thank the chairman, and I wish best wishes to the distinguished gentleman from Colorado for his service.

Everyone, though, knows that Texas has given the full measure in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, as have our soldiers across the Nation. But to our soldiers in Texas, I pay great tribute.

I rise to simply applaud this conference on its emphasis on military quality of life, military health care that has been improved, and certainly military pay and bonuses.

I also want to acknowledge a very important project that speaks to the partnership between institutions of higher learning, like Historically Black Colleges, and a Center For Human Materials Resources that will occur at Texas Southern University that addresses testing of uniforms and equipment. What a new and exciting opportunity for new partners.

Lastly, I would hope that in the future we will be able to address the question I have raised, which is the ability of individuals who are receiving their loved ones who have fallen in battle at Dover Air Force Base to be able to have a public display if they so desire. It is an executive order that there are no cameras there for families who desire that. I hope we will be able to address that.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to a support this legislation.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), the chairman of our Terrorism Subcommittee.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, let me just begin by recognizing the true bipartisan nature of this bill. The bipartisan nature of this bill is due in no small part to our great chairman and my friend, DUNCAN HUNTER, and the person that he often refers to as his partner, Congressman IKE SKELTON, and their respective staffs. IKE, thank you very much for your great cooperation, and for working through the summer as conferees with our colleagues in the Senate to fine tune this measure to provide the maximum benefit to our troops in every possible area, from pay to health care to equipment to armor and to advanced weapons systems for now and those contemplated far into the future.

We funded 11 of the top unfunded requirements for the U.S. Special Operations Command, adding almost $200 million to the command's acquisition budget. We also funded technology initiatives within each of the services and in DARPA, ensuring the continued future supremacy of U.S. weapons systems and equipment. Cutting-edge medical research was also addressed.

Seeing a continued greater need for modernization airlift, one the Air Force clearly needed but could not afford, we authorized 12 C–17 aircraft requested by DOD and added 10 more, for a total of 22 C–17 aircraft. I see this as a good start and hope we can continue to fund the C–17 line in future years. The best Army and Marine Corps in the world, which is that which we have, must be able to get to the fight to be effective.

We haven't forgotten our oversight responsibilities, providing for a number of initiatives in the acquisition, information technology and chemical demilitarization areas.

Mr. Speaker, this is a time of great stress for our Nation for we are in a war which has been referred to in many different terms, but most soberingly, the long war. This is a bill that every American can be proud of. Republicans and Democrats have come together to build a measure that helps soldiers and their families across the board.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a ''yes'' vote on this bill.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the great Roman orator, Cicero, once said that the greatest of all virtues is gratitude, and I am filled with gratitude at this moment, Mr. Speaker, for our chairman DUNCAN HUNTER, for the members of this committee, the ranking members, subcommittee chairmen, every member, as well as our hardworking and dedicated staff.

I think it is also a moment like this when we are getting ready to pass a defense bill which fulfills the first duty of Members of Congress and of our government to protect the citizens of our country.

A special note of gratitude and appreciation should go to those who wear the uniform of our country, to those who have worn the uniform of our country, to those who have sacrificed, and especially to those tremendously supportive families of those who serve in our various services.

With that, a great moment of reflection and gratitude, Mr. Speaker, I say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), a friend who came to Congress at the same time I did and who does such an enormously important job on our committee.

(Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation and congratulate our distinguished chairman and ranking member for their outstanding work.

We take great pride on this committee in doing our defense work in a bipartisan manner. In our subcommittee we had no disagreements. Our markup lasted for 5 minutes, which is typical for us. NEIL ABERCROMBIE and I came to terms on every issue. Whether it was the F–22, tactical aviation, Army modernization, you name it, we were able to find a common ground. I think the reason we can do that is because of the tone set by our leadership on both sides of the aisle.

It is especially sad, though, for me, Mr. Speaker, because my good friend is leaving. JOEL is the president of our class. We came together with the

Speaker, and JOEL will no longer be sitting alongside of us.

Mr. HEFLEY has been an outstanding Member, along with the other Members who are not returning. I just want to pay my respects to my good friend and let him know that America is better because of his service to the country.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. WELDON, thank you very much. I thank all of you for the kind words that you said about my service on this committee. But it is really my great pleasure and honor to have been able to serve with all of you, both staff and Members.

CURT has been as tireless as anybody. As I introduced people going through this exercise here, each one I wanted to say so much more about, because I have been there with them through the late nights and long hearings and so forth as we struggle. Sometimes we disagree about details between ourselves. Even on the Democrat side or the Republican side, there is some disagreement sometimes, but our hearts are all together and our focus is all together, and that is the defense of this Nation, and our hearts are with the troops.

I want to particularly thank our chairman, DUNCAN HUNTER. Golly, I couldn't have served with a better chairman than DUNCAN HUNTER. DUNCAN came to my district when he didn't know me, when I was running, CURT, as you were in the summer of 1987, and he came and helped me in my election effort. Little did I know that these 20 years later, we would be serving together in this very important job.

Mr. HUNTER, you are a great chairman, and I appreciate it so much.

Mr. SKELTON, of course, you and I have been friends for a long time. I kid you that I have named everything in your part of Missouri after you. I probably haven't gotten everything done, but whatever we have gotten done, you deserve it. I appreciate your work too.

Isn't it something to see how bipartisan this effort is when we get to this stage? It is nice to see that here. You don't see that very much. It is because we all have the same goals and the same purpose. Sometimes we have different roads to get there, but the same purpose.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage strong support for this bill.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this year's National Defense Authorization Act. It includes many provisions that are vital to giving our military the tools it needs to defend the nation, although it also leaves much work undone that will have to be addressed in the future.

The bill addresses one issue in particular that merits attention. Despite the Pentagon's repeated denials of a military readiness crisis, this bill authorizes an additional $23 billion in funding as a downpayment on the damage to the U.S. Army and Marine Corps from repeated and sustained deployments to Iraq, and the Bush Administration's decision to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through a parade of emergency supplemental appropriations. The wars themselves are wearing down our equipment at a tremendous rate. Further damage is done by supplemental appropriations because the military services are denied the funding they need in a timely and predictable fashion. These two factors are doing serious and longterm damage to the nation's military readiness, and the Congress must address them.

During Armed Services Committee deliberations on this bill in March 2006, I offered an amendment to add $42 billion for this reason. Sadly, that amendment was voted down on a party-line vote. I offered the amendment because we had a growing readiness problem and because I thought putting as much of the funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as possible into the base budget was the most honest and effective way to proceed. My approach ended up in the final version of this bill. The $23 billion in this year's bill is a good start, but this funding will have to be sustained in many subsequent bills to address the readiness crisis we continue to face.

I am also pleased that this bill includes many important legislative provisions that directly improve the lives of the people of my district and my state. First, it takes the first step toward dealing with the chemical munitions dumped off the coast of Hawaii in the 1940s. These weapons could still pose a serious health and environmental risk, and Section 314 of this bill requires a comprehensive research effort by the military to identify, analyze, and assess the potential threat these sites may pose.

Section 2843 of this bill addresses a major land transfer issue in Hawaii regarding the former Barbers Point Naval Air Station. Affordable housing for the people of Hawaii and a new public transit system are critical local issues. This language requires the Navy to turn over an important parcel of land that will allow both new housing and transit development. Balancing the needs of the military and the local population in Hawaii is a challenge, but in this case, I think an arrangement was reached that helps both sides accomplish their goals. I want to thank Chairman HUNTER and Chairman HEFLEY for working with me on this language.

Lastly, Section 343 of the bill requires an analysis by the Army of its future live-fire training infrastructure needs in Hawaii. The Army's presence in Hawaii is undergoing tremendous change. A new Stryker Brigade is due to be activated this coming year, and thousands more troops will be coming to Hawaii as part of the larger changes in the military's Pacific region basing posture. Supporting these growing needs while accommodating the cultural, environmental and quality of life concerns of the people of Hawaii is essential. This report will help Congress understand where the Army wants to go in Hawaii with its training infrastructure, and how to get there. In particular, it will address the sensitive issue of the Army's long-term future in the Makua Valley, an area of Hawaii owned by the people of Hawaii and on temporary loan to the military. Eventually, this land must be returned, so the report requires the Army to look beyond its current use of the Makua Valley toward the eventual return of this historic and environmentally sensitive treasure to the people of Hawaii.

There are critical quality of life issues that were not resolved. Specifically, it does not do enough to help military families who need the Survivor Benefit Program and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset repealed. For me, this is a basic issue of fairness that must be addressed at some point in the future. The bill does not do enough to protect TRICARE health insurance patients from skyrocketing prescription drug prices. The Department of Defense asked for legislative authority to negotiate lower prices with major drug companies. The majority was unwilling to let this provision into the final bill. Finally, the bill before us only provides a 2.2 percent pay raise for the military in 2007. This is meager thanks for our men and women in uniform in a time of war; for those who are experiencing sustained and repeated deployments and absences from their families.

As well, this raise is simply too small to help our military families keep up with rising cost of living expenses at many bases around the nation, and especially in Hawaii. We have asked a lot from these men and women. We owe them more in return.

I want to now turn to the portion of the bill that falls under the jurisdiction of the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee, on which I am proud to serve as the ranking minority member. This year, the subcommittee had a daunting task: to reconcile a budget submission that was simply unrealistic in some respects when compared to the needs of the military both today and in the future.

Our military is clearly being pulled in many directions at once. Today our forces are fighting unconventional wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the demands of which, in terms of equipment, are very different from possible future conventional conflicts. The U.S. military has to be able to fight and win both types of wars, but there is clearly not enough funding for doing everything the services want to do.

This bill authorizes critical short-term needs such as modernization of Army equipment in combat today and increased production of aircraft like the C–17 that are absolutely vital to current military operations. The bill also looks to the future in continuing successful aviation and ground systems. Finally, it takes funding from a few programs that are off-track or not working and moves that funding to more pressing needs, ensuring that taxpayer dollars are not wasted.

It also demands additional analysis and testing of systems in development that the subcommittee has concerns about. These provisions may discomfort some people at the Pentagon, but it is Congress' duty to oversee these programs and ensure that the troops get what they need.

Overall, this year I think the subcommittee did an excellent job. I especially want to commend Chairman WELDON on his leadership of the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee. His willingness to work in an open and nonpartisan manner greatly facilitates the subcommittee's work and produces a better product for our troops and the civilians who serve the nation at the Department of Defense.

Finally, another member of this committee deserves special recognition. I worked for many years with JOEL HEFLEY on the Armed Services Committee. He is a both a valued colleague and a close friend. Among his many accomplishments during his distinguished career on this committee, he helped shepherd through one of the most important changes in

military housing construction in decades. His vision for leveraging private investment dollars into a massive new program to rebuild and rehabilitate military family housing is now a reality. In my state alone almost ten thousand military homes will be upgraded in the next few years. This housing is a vital part of keeping an all-volunteer military ready, and Joel Hefley was a leader in this revolutionary program. I was and am grateful for the opportunity afforded to me to partner with him in accomplishing passage and implementation of this key legislation enhancing the quality of life of our fighting men and women.

MS. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the conference agreement on H.R. 5122, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007. I am pleased that we have completed this Act before the onset of the new fiscal year because it contains provisions vital to the operation of our Department of Defense and to the men and women of our armed forces who are fighting the war against terrorism around the world today.

Several provisions within this Act are particularly important to my district and the people of Guam. Among these provisions is Section 1014, which closes a legal loophole that had previously been utilized by the Department of the Navy to permit repair of U.S. Navy vessels in foreign shipyards at the expense of U.S. shipyards, including the shipyard on Guam. By making clear that Guam, and in particular Guam's Apra Harbor, is a U.S. location, Section 1014 of this Act make clears to the Navy that its reliance on legal minutia to enable foreign repair of ships that are homeported on Guam or that make a port call on Guam is both unacceptable and now illegal. Congress expects the Navy to adhere both to the written word of 10 U.S.C. Section 7310, as amended by this Act, and to Congress's clear intent that Navy vessels will be repaired in U.S. shipyards except when those vessels are homeported overseas, when voyage repairs are necessary or where operational demands dictate. The Navy should not and cannot use excessively liberal definitions of voyage repairs or an overseas homeport to enable foreign repair.

Further, many vessels operating in the Pacific frequently make port calls on Guam. Section 1014 of this Act, when read in concert with related instructions from the Commander, Military Sealift Command and in particular the instruction identified as COMSCINST 4700.14A, also makes clear that vessels that make such port calls on Guam should no longer be considered eligible for repair in foreign shipyards such as the shipyard in Singapore. Paragraph 6(b)(5) of COMSCINST 4700.15A states, ''If an overseas homeported ship returns to the United States at any time during its overseas assignment, the policy governing U.S. homeported ships will apply, and the homeport status will be reevaluated.'' Ships that visit Guam regularly should not be included on the Assistant Secretary of the Navy's annual memorandum designating ships as homeported overseas and therefore made eligible for overseas repair. Ships that visit Guam must be returned to Guam, Hawaii or another U.S. location for repair, thereby being worked on by U.S. industry and our domestic skilled ship repair workforce.

Adherence to this refined and reemphasized policy is important to the vitality of the U.S. ship repair industrial base which is critical to our national security. Further, strict adherence to this policy will ensure that U.S. Navy vessels are repaired in safe harbors by U.S. citizens, thereby protecting our fleet and Navy personnel from risks such as attack, subterfuge, espionage or otherwise hostile actions. Section 1014 is a reaffirmation of Congressional intent on ''repair American'' policies applicable to the U.S. Navy. Section 1014 is an expression of this Congress's strong intent to safeguard the vital U.S. ship repair workforce and industry, one that faces significant workload reductions in coming years but one that must be maintained, even at greater cost, in order to maintain a ship repair industrial base capable of meeting any potential war time demand in the future. Congress will apply foresight if the Navy will not through the exercise of our oversight responsibilities.

It should be noted that the Section 1014 of the H.R. 5122 as passed by the House has been significantly streamlined. As a result of negotiations with the Senate and with the U.S. Navy, it was determined that Section 1014 did not need to be as robustly written as initially passed by the House. It should, however, also be noted that the Armed Services Committees will evaluate Navy compliance in light of the current revision to U.S. law and Congress's concern with the Navy's growing practice of sending U.S. Navy vessels to foreign shipyards for repair.

In addition to the revisions made to 10 U.S.C. 7310 is a provision agreed to by the conference committee, Section 1015, which provides for a comprehensive report on the operation of the Guam Shipyard and the Navy's intent for future utilization of the facility. It would be shortsighted of Congress to require greater utilization of such a facility without providing for appropriate study of the facility's current capabilities and of future needs for the facility in light of expected increased military utilization of the bases on Guam. I note that Guam will soon be home to 8,000 U.S. Marines who will be relocating from Okinawa and who will have points of embarkation in Apra Harbor. Guam will also soon become home to a third fast-attack nuclear-powered submarine and is expected to host an almost continuous presence of SSGN submarines. Further, military development plans call for the homeporting of three Littoral Combat Ships in Apra Harbor as well as significantly increased utilization of Apra Harbor by Navy aircraft carrlers.

The Navy must evaluate what capability it desires from the Guam Shipyard and begin preparations for an increase in the shipyard's utilization so that the shipyard can handle the anticipated additional repair requirements. The invaluable forward and strategic location of the Guam Shipyard cannot and should not be taken for granted and preparations must begin for growing its capability and capacity because it is clear that the yard will play an increased role in Navy ship repair in the Pacific as well as provide a vital capability to the U.S. Navy in the U.S.'s most strategic location in the Pacific. Training and growing a skilled U.S. ship repair workforce is not easy work. The Navy should begin enabling steady growth at the Guam Shipyard now so that the yard is prepared for future missions.

I would like to extend my thanks to Chairman JOEL HEFLEY and Ranking Member SOLOMON ORTIZ of the Readiness Subcommittee and to Chairman DUNCAN HUNTER and Ranking Member IKE SKELTON of the full committee for their steadfast subpart in adresses these ship repair and workforce issues. I would like to particularly thank the efforts of their respective staffs, especially the efforts of House Armed Services Committee Professional Staff Members Joe Fengler and Paul Arcangeli. Mr. Fengler has recently left the committee staff but I would like to acknowledge his professionalism, expertise and work ethic in representing his Chairman and in facilitating robust oversight by the House Armed Services Committee and its Members. I know that Mr. Fengler will have a bright future and I thank him for his dedication and service to Chairman HUNTER, to the committee and to our country.

This Act also includes a provision, Section 2810, to repeal Section 2864 of Title 10 in the United States Code which prohibits H2–B skilled foreign laborers, or nonimmigrant aliens, from working on military construction (MILCON) projects on Guam. Many community and industry stakeholders recognized that the restriction on labor contracts for military construction projects on Guam does not apply to other military construction projects elsewhere. Stakeholders felt that the Guam specific restrictions could negatively impact the ability to execute the planned military growth on Guam in the required timeframe. Because completing the movement of Marines from Okinawa to Guam in a timely manner is a major component of an international agreement, it was considered important to enable the Department of Defense to complete military construction projects associated with this move without undue obstacles and in accordance with the timeframe set out by the governments of Japan and the United States. At my urging, all parties agreed that the priority for hiring labor for military construction projects on Guam will continue to go to the local workforce. Many observed, however, that the amount of work expected on Guam will likely exceed local capacity and require additional labor, as have other large construction booms in Guam's past. Nonetheless, a principal part of my focus in representing the people of Guam remains preparing and training the local Guam workforce so that Guam's workers can receive maximum benefit from the military buildup. This provision ultimately enables Guam to prepare to meet the demands of future construction while also enabling the United States Government to meet its international obligations and thereby maintain its credibility and reputation with important allies.

I am pleased that this Act also authorizes a major increase in military construction funding for Guam. The military construction funding for Guam is a continued reflection of the Department of Defense's renewed interest in utilizing Guam's first-class and strategically located bases. Guam provides a capability to our Nation to project stability into the Pacific and, if ever necessary, to project force to protect our Nation, our allies and our values. I note that the Senate had previously marked against two military construction projects scheduled for Guam. I commend the Senate Armed Services Committee leadership for working with me and with my House colleagues to retain one of these two projects. Authorizing the first phase of construction at Andersen Air Force Base's Northwest Field is a critical step to completing the already begun relocation of the Air Force's Red Horse School from Osan, Korea to Guam. This relocation is an important part of

the Air Force's realignment of forces in the Pacific and its increased utilization of Andersen Air Force Base on Guam. While I am disappointed the Senate did not recede to the House authorization for the new commercial gate at Andersen Air Force Base, I join the Senate in expressing my strong intent to evaluate military construction projects scheduled for Guam to ensure that they fit within the overall plans for growth on the island and are consistent with the needs not just of the military but of the civilian community on Guam. While I believe the commercial gate already fit well within the plans for overall development on Guam, the concerns expressed by the Senate are shared in general and I look forward to working with my House and Senate colleagues to provide robust oversight of military development on Guam to ensure it is properly executed in the interests of all parties.

The $193.446 million in military construction funding for projects on Guam authorized this year represents continued growth in military activity on the island and provides assistance to Guam in preparing incrementally for the periods of military construction on the island which will soon be far more robust.

It is unfortunate that the conferees did not include in the conference agreement Section 632 of the House passed authorization bill. This provision would have authorized servicemembers assigned to and from non-foreign overseas locations to ship a second personally owned vehicle at government expense to the new assigned duty station consistent with the authorization for assignments within the continental United States. This change in law is still needed. This is an important quality of life issue for servicemen and women and their families who receive orders to serve on bases located outside the 48 contiguous States. Supported by The Military Coalition and by the Congressional delegations from Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico and Guam, it is my hope that the committee will once again consider this provision next year and that its passage will ultimately be won. Our men and women in uniform deserve the enactment of this provision.

Finally, I am pleased that conferees retained language in this Act requiring the Department of Defense to study reestablishing a Military Entrance Processing Center on Guam. This study authorization is contained in Section 582 of the Act. The great number of patriotic men and women who enlist in our Armed Services from Guam and from the region deserve and need an entrance processing center on Guam. I encourage the Department of Defense to expeditiously undertake and complete this study. I trust it will find that the value of establishing a center on Guam is high and that such establishment will yield important results for recruitment goals. I look forward to the establishment of such a center and stand prepared to assist the Department in any way necessary to facilitate such an endeavor.

The decision by conferees to include numerous provisions important to our Nation's veterans is also to be commended. In particular, I fully support the provision which places a one-year moratorium on any increases in retail pharmaceutical prices under the TRICARE system. I join my colleagues in reiterating the principle that we must fulfill our promises to the veterans who have served our Nation. Increasing pharmaceutical fees under the TRICARE system is simply unacceptable. I also fully support the many other provisions in this Act related to protecting our veterans, our active duty personnel and our reserve personnel. I note particular support for the provision to curb predatory lending activity around military bases and the provisions to improve health care services for servicemembers suffering from post traumatic stress disorder or other combat related injuries. Our Nation remains committed to caring for those who fight and have fought to protect our way of life and our values.

This Act also contains language directing the Department of Defense to study cases of reported off shore disposal of munitions by the Department of Defense. I encourage the Department to study any cases of potential off shore disposal in the waters off of Guam. Should the Department determine that any dumping of munitions took place in the waters off of Guam, I urge the Department to take action to remedy any potential harm of such dumping. I further urge the Department to be not just comprehensive but transparent in its conduct of these studies and its findings. It is vital that the communities connected to any past disposal actions be kept fully informed as to Department findings and actions.

I also support provisions in this Act that direct the Secretary of Defense to prepare a plan that would enable the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) to assist local educational agencies that are affected by force structure changes in their communities. I plan to continue to work closely with the Department of Defense regarding the impacts that the movement of 8,000 Marines to Guam will have on Guam's local education system. The 8,000 Marines are expected to be accompanied by 9,000 dependents and perhaps several thousand civilian employees. While the dependents of the Marines are expected to attend DODEA schools, it is not unreasonable to believe that some Marine children as well as the children of civilian employees will enter the Guam Public School System. We must begin planning now to prepare Guam for any such impact.

I am a strong supporter of our Nation's National Guard and especially of the National Guard and Reserve servicemembers who reside on Guam. I remain a strong supporter of H.R. 5200, the National Guard Empowerment Act. I believe that the time has come to change the way we think about our Guard and Reserve because in this war on terror we have changed the way we use them. No longer can the Guard and Reserve come second in funding, equipping or anything else.

So while I am pleased that H.R. 5122 substantially increases authorized funding for Guard and Reserve equipment, I believe this bill should have also included the provisions of H.R. 5200 to ensure that the Guard would receive a Chief with a fourth star that sits on the Joint Chiefs of Staff and could advocate for and protect Guard interests. I also believe it is time to give the Guard independent budget authority from the parent services because history has told us that the parent services care for themselves first and the reserve component second. In an era when the Guard is completing the same mission as its active duty counterparts, it should have the same leadership and authorities as its active duty counterparts. I will continue to advocate for reform and increased empowerment of the Guard and Reserve. I look forward to the study of H.R. 5200 by the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves and trust that the Commission will recommend adoption of many of the provisions contained within the legislation. I also note that conferees removed authority included in the House passed authorization bill that would have enabled the President to mobilize Guard members without the consent of a state or territorial governor in the event of a natural disaster. Granting such an authority would remove a fundamental and constitutional control granted to state governors regarding their state militias. I am pleased that the provision has been stricken from the bill.

Finally, I am encouraged that the conferees retained in the final bill language proposed by the Senate that requires the President to appoint a senior presidential coordinator of U.S. policy on North Korea and to submit to Congress a semi-annual report on the nuclear and missile programs of North Korea (Section 1211). While I remain a strong supporter of the Six-Party Talks, North Korea's testing of a Taepodong II missile earlier this year indicates that current policy toward North Korea is not proving a sufficiently effective deterrent against the unstable regime currently in Pyongyang. More must be done to secure our country and to assure allies in the Pacific of their safety from a North Korean regime that appears determined to develop additional nuclear weapons and to develop the means to deliver them. I also support the $10.4 billion in funding authorized in this Act for missile defense including the increase of $100 million for the ship based Aegis ballistic missile defense system, a system vital to protecting islands in the Pacific, including Guam, from any North Korean threat.

Mr. Speaker, I have addressed only a few of the many provisions within this Act. I commend my colleagues for their work in finalizing the defense authorization bill. The legislation provides for measures ranging from a well deserved pay raise for our uniformed servicemembers to construction funding for ships vital to our Navy's future. I am in support of this legislation and urge my colleagues to pass H.R. 5122.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference report.

As a relatively new Member of the Armed Services Committee, I appreciate having had the opportunity to work with my colleagues, especially Chairman HUNTER and Ranking Member SKELTON, on a number of provisions of particular importance to Colorado.

I want to express my particular thanks to JOEL HEFLEY, the dean of our Colorado delegation, who I am proud to call my colleague and friend. He and I have joined forces on a wide variety of matters, including steps to respond to the danger to our state's communities from wildfires, and I have benefited greatly from the opportunity to work with him both before and especially after I became a member of the Armed Services Committee.

The Senate bill included language to name a housing facility at Fort Carson in honor of Representative HEFLEY, who is retiring at the end of the year. I thought it was appropriate, and while the conference report does not include that provision, I am glad to note that it does include a section (Section 2002) that accurately states that since his election in 1986, Representative HEFLEY ''has served in the House of Representatives with distinction, class, integrity, and honor.''

The same section goes on to note that Representative HEFLEY'S efforts on our committee have benefited the military value of installations in Colorado and the quality of life of the men and women stationed there. It also reminds us that he was a leader in efforts to retain and expand Fort Carson and was a leader in efforts to eliminate inadequate housing on military installations, beginning with a pilot program at that Colorado base, an effort which has "brought meaningful improvements to living conditions for thousands of members of the Armed Forces and their spouses and children at installations throughout the United States.

And it concludes by saying that "Congress recognizes and commends Representative JOEL HEFLEY for his 20 years of service to benefit the people of Colorado, members of the Armed Forces and their families, veterans, and the United States"—a well-earned commendation in which I completely concur.

Looking ahead, I anticipate receipt of two reports on matters of particular importance to Colorado.

Part of the report of our House Armed Forces Committee accompanying this authorization bill reflected our recognition of the importance of the High Altitude Aviation Training Site (HAATS) based at the Eagle, Colorado Regional Airport and its need for enough aircraft to fulfill its mission.

HAATS is the primary site for training military aviators on operations in hostile, high altitude, and power-limited environments under all seasonal weather conditions, such as Afghanistan. Responding to language I had included in the Defense Authorization bill last year, the Army National Guard pledged to provide two Blackhawks to HAATS. However, I'm told HAATS needs five Blackhawks in order to sustain training requirements.

To lay the foundation for possible future action to meet that need, our committee's report included a request for the Secretary of the Army to provide a report on high altitude aviation training to the congressional defense committees by December 15, 2006. The report is to include: (1) The current location and type of high altitude training, to include the percentage of pilots who receive such training on an annual basis at each location and the types of aircraft used in such training; (2) the number and type of helicopters required to provide the high altitude aviation training needed to sustain the war strategies contained in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, assuming that priority for such training is given to commanders, instructor pilots, aviation safety officers, and deploying units; and (3) a thorough evaluation of the accident rates for deployed Army helicopter pilots who received high altitude training and deployed helicopter pilots who did not receive such training, including the number of accidents related to power management, using high and low estimates and the number of accidents involving combat and non-combat environments. I expect that this report will make clear the importance of HAATS' critical mission and the need for its having more aircraft.

And this conference report includes a section (section 2827) requiring a report by November 30th of this year analyzing of any potential expansion of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site, which is associated with Fort Carson. As a member of the Armed Service Committee and the Colorado delegation, I will be very interested in the information presented in this report.

The conference report provides funds for important projects in Colorado, including $10 million for work at Buckley Air Force Base, $4.9 million for construction at Peterson Air Force Base, $21 million for work at Schreiver Air Force Base, and $26.1 million to be used at Fort Carson.

And, at the national level, it includes many provisions that will improve our overall military readiness and provide for our troops and retirees.

Among other things, it authorizes a 2.2 percent pay raise, effective January 1, 2007, and includes a provision, developed through the leadership of our colleague Representative JOHN SPRATT, to provide targeted pay raises for mid-grade and senior NCOs and warrant officers, effective April 1, 2007. It also expands TRICARE Reserve Select to members of the Selected Reserves, and terminates the current three-tier eligibility program while putting a one-year moratorium on any increases in retail pharmaceutical prices under the TRICARE system.

The conference report also establishes additional financial protections for service members, prohibiting creditors from charging service members and their dependents annual interest rates for loans higher than the legal limit for state residents, or no more than 36 percent in any case.

And, of course, it authorizes a $70 billion supplemental for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, including $23.7 billion to replace and reset equipment lost or damaged in operations.

I opposed President Bush's decision to invade Iraq and my concerns about this poorly managed and badly planned war have been realized. I believe it was a strategic mistake to make nationbuilding in Iraq the centerpiece of our war against Islamic terrorism—a belief that has been strengthened by the April 2006 National Intelligence Estimate entitled "Trends in Global Terrorism: Implication for the United States," portions of which were recently declassified. But now that our troops are there and Iraq is struggling to avoid a slide into civil war, we cannot withdraw them immediately, and we must continue to provide the funds necessary to maintain and re-equip them.

I urge approval of the conference report.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I reluctantly rise today to oppose the Conference Report for The National Defense Authorization Act, H.R. 5122.

The National Defense Authorization Act is Congress' only opportunity each year to seriously debate the defense polices of our Nation. Yet, when the House debated this legislation in earlier this year, the Republican Majority prevented any debate about the most important national defense issue we face: the war in Iraq. More than 2,700 American service members have lost their lives fighting in Iraq. American taxpayers have paid more than $400 billion to fund the effort. Yet, despite authorizing an additional $70 billion for the war, we have had no debate on this floor about our policy or needed strategy changes. This is an unconscionable failure of the House.

The House previously made a mockery of Congress' responsibilities to guide policy by shamefully politicizing Representative JOHN MURTHA's thoughtful proposal for a phased redeployment of American troops in Iraq. Regardless of one's opinion on the best course of action in the war, the failure of Congress to entertain debate or exercise real oversight is a dereliction of our duty.

Just this week, news reports revealed that a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) written in April comes to the conclusion that the war in Iraq is making America less safe. I have been telling my constituents for months that this war is endangering the lives of our service members, fueling the terrorist insurgency, and failing to make us safer. The NIE confirms this.

On another important subject, Congress is also long overdue for a serious examination of our nuclear weapons policy. Fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we behave as if the Cold War never ended, maintaining a stockpile of thousands of nuclear weapons, many on hair-trigger missiles—far more than we need to assure our continued military dominance. It is time we honor the commitment we made when we signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and begin to phase out our nuclear stockpile. This bill fails to make any changes to our nuclear posture and it is my hope that the committee will work with me to get the United States to honor our NPT pledge.

I am also disappointed that this bill authorizes $9.4 billion for the missile defense programs within the Missile Defense Agency (MDA). Since its inception during the Reagan administration, MDA has spent nearly $100 billion for missile defense programs that have repeatedly failed flight tests. This money would have been more wisely spent on other national security priorities, such as jamming devices for improvised explosive devices (IEDs), up-armoring Humvees, and radiological detection at our ports and borders. One of the craziest ideas I have ever heard is that we should deploy this missile defense system as a way to test it. Simple strategic analysis tells us that a provocative yet permeable defense is destabilizing and weakens the security of all Americans.

This authorization bill fails to address and make needed changes to U.S. policy in any one of these three areas, which is why I oppose this bill.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this $533 billion Defense authorization bill.

But, Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today does have a very important provision in it: language preventing the establishment of permanent military bases in Iraq.

This is an important first step in taking the targets off the backs of our troops in Iraq by showing the world that we have no designs to stay in Iraq permanently.

However, this provision will only apply to funds for FY07. We need to make the policy of the United States not to have permanent military bases in Iraq.

Futhermore, it's unfortunate that this bill is the vehicle for this critical policy.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that our Nation is best defended by funding priorities that make our Nation and world safer.

This bill, I'm sorry to say, does not do that.

Mr. Speaker, what does it say about our priorities when Congress authorizes nearly $70 billion more for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan without any direction, or exit strategy?

Mr. Speaker, what does it say about our priorities when this bill authorizes a $10.4 billion for a missile defense program that has consistently failed, will never protect us from terrorists?

What it is says, Mr. Speaker is the priorities of the Bush administration are grossly misplaced. When it comes to making our Nation safe, they are spending almost $2 billion a week on a war in Iraq, but can't spare a dime for the security of the Port of Oakland, our Nation's fourth largest container port.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to reject this bill and offer Americans a real bill that protects America and truly reflects our nation's security priorities.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the conference report.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on questions previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order: adoption of conference report on H.R. 5441; adoption of conference report on H.R. 5122; and passage of H.R. 4772, in each case by the yeas and nays.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 5441, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The pending business is the question of adoption of the conference report on the bill, H.R. 5441, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the conference report.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 412, nays 6, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 509]

YEAS—412

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Andrews
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bass
Bean
Beauprez
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd
Bradley (NH)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Brown (OH)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Carter
Chabot
Chandler
Chocola
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Cramer
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cubin
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis (TN)
Davis, Jo Ann
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Fitzpatrick (PA)
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green (WI)
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Gutknecht
Hall
Harman
Harris
Hart
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Higgins
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Hyde
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Istook
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jindal
Johnson (CT)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Keller
Kelly
Kennedy (MN)
Kennedy (RI)
Kildee
Kilpatrick (MI)
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Leach
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mack
Maloney
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McCrery
McGovern
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinney
McMorris Rodgers
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Mica
Michaud
Millender-McDonald
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy
Murtha
Musgrave
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Neugebauer
Northup
Norwood
Nunes
Nussle
Oberstar
Olver
Ortiz
Osborne
Otter
Owens
Oxley
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pombo
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Sabo
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanders
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Schwartz (PA)
Schwarz (MI)
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Sherman
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shuster
Simmons
Simpson
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Sodrel
Solis
Souder
Spratt
Stearns
Stupak
Sullivan
Sweeney
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walsh
Wamp
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wexler
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NAYS—6

Flake
Hostettler
Markey
McDermott
Paul
Stark

NOT VOTING—14

Burgess
Case
Castle
Evans
Foley
Ford
Jenkins
Jones (NC)
Lewis (GA)
Meehan
Ney
Obey
Strickland
Wilson (SC)

□ 1810

Mr. McDERMOTT changed his vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Ms. DeLAURO and Mr. WALSH changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the conference report was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. BOEHNER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, just to give everyone as much information as I have, after this series of votes we will move to a series of suspension votes. We are expecting to have a port security conference report available some time this evening.

I wish I could give you a more exact time. I expect that we could see this at 9 to 10 o'clock in the Rules Committee, or somewhere in that vicinity, and have it on the floor and hopefully be finished by midnight.

I would be happy to yield to my colleague from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. Is it therefore safe to assume that the port security bill would be the last bill on which Members would be required to vote, or would there possibly be other business following that?

Mr. BOEHNER. I would expect that the port security vote around midnight would be the last vote for the day.

I do expect that will be our last vote, we will complete our work, and I will have met my commitment to all of you.