Last week was the fourth straight week in which jobless claims were below 400,000, as claims dropped to 348,000. In headlines across America, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said of the decrease in jobless claims, that "the odds increasingly favor a revival in job creation." As Democrats continue to try to talk down the economy, the news of the recovery is just too clear to ignore: 126,000 new jobs in October were announced this morning.

Republican policies of tax relief, fiscal discipline, corporate accountability, and an emphasis on national security have restored our Nation's confidence and promoted a healthy business environment.

In conclusion, God bless our troops.

THE ECONOMY

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, the economy is turning around: a 7.2 percent growth last quarter in the gross domestic product, the largest since Ronald Reagan cut taxes in 1984. The jobless claims have fallen. More people are working than ever before. Productivity has increased. Tax cuts work.

Why do they work? Because the more money a worker has in his pocket, the more money he is going to spend. When he goes out and buys more clothes, tires, or hamburgers, small businesses react by expanding their inventory. When they do that, they also hire more employees. When more people have jobs, more people are working, more people pay taxes, and less people are dependent on government welfare checks.

Tax cuts work. The best solutions are always seen in the private sector and not in government. I hope the next time when we have an opportunity to make these tax cuts permanent that we can get the Democrats, particularly those in the other body, to join us in making these tax cuts a permanent part of our Tax Code.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1588, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2004

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 437 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. Res. 437
Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the

H. RES. 437

MRS. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 437 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. Res. 437
Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the

H. RES. 437

MRS. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 437 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. Res. 437
Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the
conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 1588) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2004 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

This morning, the Committee on Rules met and granted a normal conference report rule for H.R. 1588, the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004. The rule waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration.

In addition, the rule provides for 1 hour of debate equally divided and controlled between the chairman and ranking minority member of the House Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. Speaker, this should not be a controversial rule. It is the type of rule we expect to see in conference reports we consider in the House. And I want to especially give my thanks to the chairman and ranking member of this committee, because they have done a phenomenal job with this bill. It is a bill that sets an example for the rest of the committees in the House as far as working together and doing what is right for the country and what is right for our servicemen.

This legislation firmly shows our commitment to restoring the strength of our military. The conference report authorizes $400.5 billion in budget authority for the Department of Defense and the national security programs of the Department of Energy, which matches the President’s request.

The legislation authorizes the funding necessary to defend the Nation and our interests around the globe. It contains important provisions, such as concurrent receipt pay for the Nation’s veterans, commonsense environmental reforms to ease the transition of troops to a peacetime training environment, and important new benefits for military personnel and their families.

The Iraqi conflict and our continuing war on terrorism have brought a renewed and proper focus on national defense. We owe much to our men and women in uniform; and their success in Iraq and Afghanistan is a testament to their bravery, training and equipment, and their commitment to defend our freedoms. It is the means by which we meet our goal to provide the American people a decent quality of life with an across-the-board 4.15 percent increase for military personnel, so as to sustain the commitment and professionalism of America’s all-volunteer armed services and the families that support them.

The pay raise will cut the pay gap between military and civilian jobs from 6.4 to 5.5 percent. This will be the fifth consecutive year that pay raises have exceeded that factor.

For our active soldiers, the conferees increased the rates of special pay for those subject to hostile fire and imminent danger worldwide from $150 a month to $250 per month for the period beginning October 1 of 2003, through December 31 of 2004.

We also want to acknowledge where these active soldiers get the source of their strength. It is from their families here at home. And we are increasing the family separation allowance for servicemembers with dependents from $100 a month to $250 a month for the period October 1 this year through December 31 of 2004.

I also want to take a moment to personally thank the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) for tirelessly fighting for the solid “Buy American Provisions” that are included in this conference report. That is extremely important to my State of North Carolina.

The ongoing war on terrorism dictates the need to have reliable domestic sources of weapons and equipment. Unfortunately, fewer American companies are designing and manufacturing the components and materials used in our military systems as the U.S. industrial base is becoming more dependent on foreign sources. And this is a disturbing factor to me, as I know it is to the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER). We have got to be able to produce these equipment needs here in the United States so we are not at the mercy of some other country if they decide for some reason to cut us off.

However, I am very disappointed, and I know the chairman is too, that the conference report did not include a key provision that was passed by the House that would ensure that all the components of the Department of Defense uniforms come from American companies. The language specifically worked to more adequately cover domestic textiles and leather industries.

I would also like to congratulate my good friend and colleague on the Committee on Rules, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. BISHOP), for authorizing the 1-year citizenship provision for our valiant servicemen and women. It reduces the length of service requirement for naturalization to 1 year. And I would also like to note that the ranking member on the Committee on Rules, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), worked hard on this issue as well.

On a positive note, I am extremely pleased and proud that H.R. 1588 established a pay-scale program for multiaxially compensated disabled military retirees who were injured in combat for their full retirement pay from DOD and disability compensation from the Veterans’ Administration beginning January 1, 2004. Over the next 10 years, this bill will provide concurrent receipt to more veterans than have ever been covered by current law. Our veterans have given deeply and heroically, and it is our honor to extend that factor.

So let us pass this rule and pass the underlying defense authorization conference report. At the end of the day, we will be making our homeland safer, and we will be supporting our sons and daughters serving in our military. We are preparing for victory. At this crucial time in our history, this bill is most important.

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

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

(Mr. FROST asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, for all of my 25 years in this Congress, I have worked to strengthen America’s military and to increase our national security. Like other defense proponents on both sides of the aisle, I have bent over backwards to put politics aside and work together to support America’s men and women in uniform.

For instance, nearly 18 months ago, I introduced the Citizenship for America’s Troops Act, a bill to help U.S. troops who are legal immigrants by ensuring they could continue to serve in the armed forces and burdensome obstacles that they face in the current citizenship process. Working with Democrats and Republicans in the House and the Senate, a good compromise was finally reached, one that is in this defense authorization conference report. It is not perfect, but it does provide much-needed relief to the more than 37,000 patriotic legal immigrants on active duty in the U.S. military, brave men and women who have been fighting and dying for a country in which they could not even vote.

This kind of cooperation and bipartisan approach, Mr. Speaker, is fundamental to our efforts to keep America’s military strong, especially at a time when so many Americans are losing faith in President Bush’s ability to win the peace in Iraq.

While this conference report offers much to be proud of, Mr. Speaker, like the military pay raise and health care improvements for the National Guard and Reserves that Democrats have fought for, it also demonstrates how bipartisanship is becoming increasingly rare under this all-Republican government.

During the conference committee negotiations on this bill, Republican leaders shut out Democrats, including the distinguished ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELOTON), on some key areas of the conference report. Missouri will speak about those in more length. This is part of a clear and dangerous pattern by Republican leaders. We have seen it on the energy bill, the
Medicare bill, and the FAA bill; but it is extraordinarily disappointing to see America’s national defense policy treated in such a partisan manner.

Moreover, the conference report itself contains several provisions where Republicans and Democrats who are fighting hard to repeal the disabled veterans tax? Right now it penalizes nearly 560,000 disabled veterans, denying them $3 billion in military retirement benefits each year. As the American Legion has said, Mr. Speaker, the right thing to do is repeal the tax for all service-disabled military retirees. Democrats have proposed a plan to do that; but Republicans, led by President Bush, continue to block it. In fact, in this bill, Republicans refuse to help almost 70 percent of those disabled veterans, Mr. Speaker.

So when Republican Members are at home for Veterans’ Day celebrations next week, I hope they will be honest with the people about the provisions in this bill that provide only partial relief to only a fraction of America’s disabled veterans. I hope they will explain that they did not think they could afford to restore military retirement benefits to 390,000 disabled veterans because they spent so much of the U.S. Treasury on tax breaks for the wealthiest few.

Second, does anyone really believe that national security requires that we gut landmark environmental protections? Of course not. But rolling back America’s environmental protections is a Republican priority. So Republicans stuck into this bill provisions that attack the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. And, third, is it really necessary to weaken the workplace protections of 746,000 patriotic Americans employed at the Pentagon, the same people who responded so courageously to the September 11 attack on that building? And is it really necessary to eliminate the rules prohibiting patronage at the Pentagon? Of course not. But gutting important worker rights is another key Republican priority, and they are shamefully using this national defense bill to do it.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, there are some areas of this conference report where bipartisanism and sound defense policy have prevailed. These include the substantial quality-of-life improvements that Democrats have fought for. Those include a 41 percent increase in basic pay for all members of the Armed Forces, plus targeted increases for mid-grade and senior noncommissioned officers who are critical to our military readiness. They also include an increase in imminent-danger pay and the family separation allowance for U.S. troops serving in harm’s way.

The conference report also builds on our efforts to support the National Guard and Reserves, who bear more and more of the burden of defending America at home and abroad. For instance, it ensures that when the Ready Reserve cannot get hazardous duty pay, they will too. And if members of the Ready Reserve cannot get health insurance through their employer, it gives them access to the same TRICARE system that serves the military. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the conference report includes my own legislation to make life easier for the Guard and Reserves, both active duty and retirees, and their families, by allowing them unlimited access to commissaries. They and their families are making great sacrifices for this Nation and they deserve our support.

Finally, the bill continues to make important investments in the wide range of weapons that assure America’s military superiority throughout the world. It includes full funding of $4.4 billion for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, the next generation multirole fighter of the future for the Air Force and Marines, and also fully funds the F/A-22 Raptor aircraft, the high-technology air dominance fighter for the Air Force, by providing $3.5 billion for 22 planes, and it includes the full $1.2 billion needed for the V-22 Osprey aircraft.

Mr. Speaker, all these important prodefense provisions have strong bipartisan support. They reflect the long-standing commitment of Democrats and Republicans to work together to ensure the U.S. military has the resources it needs. That is the type of bipartisanship and cooperation that our national security policy requires. It builds strong public support for a U.S. foreign policy here at home and ensures our troops have the resources they need to do the dangerous job we ask of them.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Republican leaders seem to have forgotten these lessons. And the President too often ignored them in the run-up to the war in Iraq, which is a big reason it will be so hard to restore President Bush’s credibility and the public’s confidence in his ability to win the peace in Iraq. The American people deserve better than that, and so do our troops in the field. I urge my Republican friends to remember that, especially as U.S. troops and U.S. taxpayers continue to shoulder almost the entire burden for rebuilding Iraq.

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

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER), our distinguished chairman of the Committee on Rules.

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)
Now, I want to say that as I listened to my friend from Dallas go through his prepared statement on this he did end by talking about the fact that Democrats and Republicans alike stand together in support of a strong defense, but I believe that any colloquy of the notion that was made that somehow Republicans are interested in gutting worker rights, murdering our environment. Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker.

I will say that it has come to the environmental issues, and I know the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) will get into this as he has in the environmental issues, and I know from the truth, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), my good partner on the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the gentleman from California (Mr. GOSS), I think made a point very important for us to address, especially as the issue of concurrent receipts is important for us as the environmental issues, and I know from the truth, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the well of the House to congratulate my colleague, Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member on the Committee on Armed Services, Mr. SKELTON.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Armed Services. Mr. HUNTER.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time. Let me congratulate my colleague, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), my good partner on the Committee on Armed Services, and all the Members, Republican and Democrat, who helped to put this bill together. And, he gave us a lot of time and attention, and all the members of the Committee on Rules. Let me just say a word or two about what this bill does because this bill makes what I consider to be some sweeping reforms and it is a great bill. It covers a number of major areas, and along with those major areas, the other kind of terrorist activity that we are seeing, we have to be prepared to deal with that.

Mr. Speaker, I urge strong support of this rule and the conference report. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member on the Committee on Armed Services. Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule and thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) for presenting it this morning.

This was a difficult bill, and shortly we will talk about some bumps along the way. We are at a crossroads. We must do our very best, and I think we have done a good job as it relates to the troops of the United States of America. They are superb. They are doing a good job. We must pay respect to them legislatively as well as to their families legislatively, and I think we have done that by the various items. The family separation allowance, the combat pay, the pay raise and all of those personnel items that we touched upon is our way of saying thanks for a good job well done.

So I support this rule. In the process I want to express my deep appreciation to everyone in uniform and to those families who support those in uniform. And, sadly, we have lost some and I hope that this is some consolation that we continue to support the American men and women who are wearing the uniform of the United States of America.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Armed Services. Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time. Let me congratulate my colleague, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), my good partner on the Committee on Armed Services, and all the Members, Republican and Democrat, who helped to put this bill together. And, he gave us a lot of time and attention, and all the members of the Committee on Rules.

Let me just say a word or two about what this bill does because this bill makes what I consider to be some sweeping reforms and it is a great bill. It covers a number of major areas, and along with those major areas, the other kind of terrorist activity that we are seeing, we have to be prepared to deal with that.

Lives are being lost on a regular basis because of this battle against international terrorism, but with passage of this legislation we will be able to diminish the threat of loss of life and ensure that our men and women in uniform are equipped and compensated to deal with this very, very serious issue.

Mr. Speaker, I urge strong support of this rule and the conference report.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member on the Committee on Armed Services. Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule and thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) for presenting it this morning.

This was a difficult bill, and shortly we will talk about some bumps along the way. We are at a crossroads. We must do our very best, and I think we have done a good job as it relates to the troops of the United States of America. They are superb. They are doing a good job. We must pay respect to them legislatively as well as to their families legislatively, and I think we have done that by the various items. The family separation allowance, the combat pay, the pay raise and all of those personnel items that we touched upon is our way of saying thanks for a good job well done.

So I support this rule. In the process I want to express my deep appreciation to everyone in uniform and to those families who support those in uniform. And, sadly, we have lost some and I hope that this is some consolation that we continue to support the American men and women who are wearing the uniform of the United States of America.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Armed Services. Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time. Let me congratulate my colleague, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), my good partner on the Committee on Armed Services, and all the Members, Republican and Democrat, who helped to put this bill together. And, he gave us a lot of time and attention, and all the members of the Committee on Rules.

Let me just say a word or two about what this bill does because this bill makes what I consider to be some sweeping reforms and it is a great bill. It covers a number of major areas, and along with those major areas, the other kind of terrorist activity that we are seeing, we have to be prepared to deal with that.

Lives are being lost on a regular basis because of this battle against international terrorism, but with passage of this legislation we will be able to diminish the threat of loss of life and ensure that our men and women in uniform are equipped and compensated to deal with this very, very serious issue.

Mr. Speaker, I urge strong support of this rule and the conference report.
So we are empowering Mr. Rumsfeld with the ability to reshape his civil service so that instead of taking 4 or 5 or 6 months to go through the bureaucracy to qualify a civil servant to work at a job so you get to the point where you just direct a sergeant to get it and he authenticates it, that is, we will now be able to quickly move civil servants into that job. We will be able to hire them quickly, and when people show an extraordinary ability to work and an enthusiasm and dedication that rises above the community, that they will be rewarded for that. And we have tested these ideas in pilot projects around the country, and the members who have participated in the pilot projects have voted that they like it.

So we are undertaking important reforms in this bill. We are giving the military the tools they need to fight this new type of war. I would urge everyone to support the rule and support the bill.

Ms. BROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. HARMAN).

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, as the ranking member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I am a conferee on the Defense Authorization Act. Virtually all of the funding for intelligence is contained in this bill.

For the first time, like a number of conferees, I am enormously concerned about developing bunker buster nuclear weapons, weakening nonproliferation programs, and an assault on collective bargaining, all of which is unfortunately part of this legislation.

Nonetheless, I signed the conference report and I intend to vote for final passage. The lives of American soldiers, sailors, airmen and women, Marines and civilians are on the line in Iraq and Afghanistan. The problem has been that the strategy for our war on terrorism has not been as clear as it should be.

The Intelligence Community has yet to acknowledge any flaws in prewar intelligence. With American lives on the line now, the shortcomings in prewar intelligence must be addressed now. A "lessons learned" study cannot await the conclusion of David Kay's ongoing WMD search. Regardless of what he finds, there were problems with collection, analysis and the way policy makers used the information.

I strongly support this bill's requirement of an Iraq "lessons learned" report by the Department of Defense due March 31 of next year. As a conference on the intelligence authorization bill, I plan to push for an interim "lessons learned" report from the Intelligence Community on the same date as the military's report is due, and I hope that the gentleman from Florida (Chairman Goss) will join me in this request.

Mr. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT).

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. MYRICK) for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), who has just gone through very difficult negotiations at a very difficult time. Some Members may not know that he lost his home to the California wildfires that swept through southern California. So I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER).

This is good news. This defense conference report is good news for our young men and women who serve in the Armed Services and are required to carry out the will of this Nation overseas. We want to give them the tools necessary so they can do their job and come home safely to their families, and this bill provides many of the tools necessary for that to happen. It is also good news for our veterans in addressing the issue of concurrent receipt.

It is also very good news for the KC-135. This is a critical part of our defense strategy that completes the circuit for the start of a new program in fulfilling a great need by replacing our KC-135's, the tanker fleet that we currently have.

For those who are not familiar with the KC-135, this is basically a gas station in the sky. It refuels other aircraft, and it is a very necessary link in projecting power for this country. Afghanistan and Iraq once again confirmed the necessity that in today's war on terrorism, we must have tankers to fulfill the role of carrying out and projecting power. The problem has been that we have been short of these tankers. The average age of the KC-135s is 43 years. Can the Members imagine, Mr. Speaker, coming back and forth to work in a 1960 automobile? This is basically what we have asked our young men and women to do. The average age of the 100 tankers that the Air Force has developed a proposal to implement that strategy. It allows the Air Force to lease no more than 20 of the 100 tankers. The Federal Government will have to spend approximately $94.4 billion over 35 years. What needs to be done? We are going to address the delivery schedule. It must be accelerated so that we can achieve our production rate and a lower cost per aircraft. We also need to provide adequate budget authority to serve the taxpayers with significant reduction in the cost of this program by accelerating the production rate. But over all, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that this is a very good conference report, and it is going to be something that is going to help our young men and women as well as veterans. I support the rule, and I support the defense conference report.

Mr. WARNER, Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC. November 5, 2003.

Hon. JOHN WARNER, Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for your consideration of the Department of Defense's proposal to lease 100 KC-767A aircraft through 2010, an estimated $4 billion, but the short-term plan was shortsighted. It does create a long-term problem. I will submit for the RECORD the letter from Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz outlining the plan to change the delivery schedule for the first 100 aircraft. It essentially changes it from a 20-per-year delivery rate to a 12-per-year delivery rate.

When we assume the total program of 400 aircraft, instead of ending this program in fiscal year 2025, it will now end in fiscal year 2039. That moves the midpoint of this entire program 7 years to the right. If we assume an average cost increase of 4 percent over that period, the Federal Government will have to spend approximately $84.4 billion over 35 years. What needs to be done? We are going to address the delivery schedule. It must be accelerated so that we can achieve our production rate and a lower cost per aircraft. We also need to provide adequate budget authority to serve the taxpayers with significant reduction in the cost of this program by accelerating the production rate. But over all, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that this is a very good conference report, and it is going to be something that is going to help our young men and women as well as veterans. I support the rule, and I support the defense conference report.
Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I support this bill, and I am glad to see us put some quality-of-life provisions in it; and I commend the chairman, whom I have worked with for 20-odd years, for once again bringing a bill to closure.

I do have to call attention to the fact that this rule waives all points of order, which is typical, but in this case, as ranking member of the Budget Committee, I feel obliged to make my colleagues aware that it is we who are waiving because it is not a good way to do business; it is not a good way to keep a budget.

The conference report contains two provisions that entail significant spending over and above the amounts allowed in the budget resolution. One allows concurrent receipt of military retirement benefits for retirees who also received disability benefits. The other commits the government to lease and purchase up to 20 or maybe even 100 new tanker aircraft.

No funds were added to this conference report to pay for either of these programs, and that is my problem. Between the two of them, they will entail unfunded future commitments of approximately $40 billion, $22 billion for concurrent receipt, $18 billion for 100 new tanker aircraft.

As a member of the Committee on Armed Services, I support the compromise on concurrent receipt, and I understand the need for new tankers; but I am concerned, and have to be, about the way we are doing this. The rule before us would waive the point of order that would otherwise lie against the conference report for some clear and substantial departures from the budget resolution that is supposed to be prevailing in this House.

We just finished the fiscal year 2003. Mr. Spratt, the largest deficit in our peacetime history, $374 billion. The deficit for next year, fiscal year 2004, is likely to break that by $100 billion, even without the additional cost of these programs which are not included in any of CBO’s or OMB’s projections.

All I am saying is if concurrent receipt is a worthy benefit, and I think it is, then let us pay for it or at least let us recognize fully in the budget the cost of it. If we need these tankers, and I accept the argument that we do, then let us pay for them. Let us make the argument and pay for them and set the priority in the budget. This bill does not do that, and this rule would allow Congress to flout the budget resolution without facing up to these costs. If Congress feels that it is necessary to abandon the budget resolution that supposedly prevails in the House and further increases the deficit, then we ought to be accountable for that decision. But the rule would make sure that no Member of this body will have the opportunity to demand such accountability.

Let me tell the Members specifically that two problems in the conference report with respect to items that give me trouble. The conference report phases in a compromised version of concurrent receipt. In 2004 this would increase direct spending by $800 million. By 2013 this would increase annual cost to as much as $3.5 billion. This provision would cost an estimated $22 billion in additional direct spending over the next 10 years, none of which is provided for in the mandatory spending provisions of the budget resolution.

That is why I call it a substantial departure.

There is another anomaly in the way concurrent receipt is treated. Since the mid-1990s, we have recognized military retirement costs through an accrual system that sets aside funds to cover the cost of retirement benefits we owe in the future for today’s military service.

The concurrent receipt provisions in this bill eliminate a reduction or offset in military retirement and thus increase military retirement benefits. Under current procedures, we should increase our accrual payments to account for the fact that we have just increased future spending on retirement benefits. This bill does not do that. It departs from a convention we adopted 20 years ago for reporting military retirement programs.

The conference agreement also includes language that was not in either bill to lease 20 tankers and then buy 80 more. In effect, what it allows is incremental funding; we have not done for big procurement programs for a long, long time. It entails at least a liability of $4 billion, maybe as much as $18 billion, and yet none of this money is in the Air Force budget. None of this authority has been recognized. What we have here is an effort to obscure the fact that we are increasing the defense budget but not adding BA commensurate to the amount of the increase.

There are committees right now and next week railing against corporate miscounting in this country and should be. But we should keep our own books in proper order in order to make such criticisms. This is not a way to do business. I support the bill and hope it does not constitute a precedent for the future.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Pence).

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

I rise in strong support of the rule and of the conference report with a deep sense of gratitude to the gentleman from California (Chairman Hunter), as well as the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. Skelton), ranking member, for their extraordinary and bipartisan leadership on behalf of that fundamental function—this Congress to provide for the common defense and in meeting the urgent needs of soldiers in the field of today, our intelligence community, but also meeting the needs of those who have served in uniform. I believe this conference report goes a long way toward discharging that duty.

Mr. Speaker, in the survival of freedom we literally are American citizens. As I look at veterans of our different wars, being in a world of limited resources, we can only in this Congress do the right thing. I rise specifically today on virtually the eve of Veterans’ Day to point out how this Congress, thanks to the bipartisan leadership of the defense authorizing committee, is doing the right thing by veterans in the area of concurrent receipt.

Since arriving in Congress, I have heard from one veteran after another, men and women who are in uniform of the United States of America, about the injustice of losing disability benefits for which they were eligible as veterans at the time they reached the age of retirement. Thanks to this legislation, in most cases disability benefits incurred in uniform or earned in uniform will not be forfeited simply because a veteran reaches the age of retirement. The Good Book tells us if we owe debts, pay debts; if honor, then honor; if respect, then respect. By meeting the urgent needs of the defense of the Nation today, we pay a debt to those who risk and expend their lives in the advancement of our freedom. But by addressing the injustice of cutting veterans’ benefits, this Congress today goes a long way toward paying the debt we owe to those we can never repay.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Evans).

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time and for his leadership.

I rise to point out that this conference report does not adequately address the needs of our disabled military retirees. Later today we will be considering a motion to recommit. And I strongly urge Members to support that motion and urge that we fix a tremendous injustice in this conference report.

The conference report provides no relief whatsoever to two-thirds of disabled veterans who are now paying the tax burden. The Disabled American Veterans in Washington has provided only limited relief from the unfair tax burden to those it does cover. Under this report, veterans with disabilities rated at 50 percent or more who have served before receiving their full military retirement pay. The vast majority of eligible veterans are left out. In fact, 400,000 veterans with disabilities rated under 50
percent would not receive any relief at all. In other words, some veterans who lost their limbs while serving their country are not considered worthy of relief after they get back to the States. This is not a full concurrent receipt as has been claimed. This is clearly not a victory for veterans. It is an attempt to divide and conquer veterans so as to deprive most retirees of their earned retirement benefits. A vote for the motion to recommit is a vote for full concurrent receipt and an end to the tax on our wounded veterans.

I urge all Members to vote for this motion and support what 374 Members have already said by cosponsoring legislation for full, not partial, concurrent receipt.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the veterans of our country are wise enough to make judgments about where they want to go, and I salute them for raising the issues that we have been dealing with for the last few years.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST).

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this opportunity to say something in front that I will vote for this defense authorization. The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELETON), and a whole range of people have done an outstanding job to ensure that not only of the United States and our security but of those young men and women who are out there basically buttressing the pillars of civilization.

The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) mentioned a little while ago that a 19-year-old rifleman ought to get the best training in the world. I agree with him 100 percent. I was a 19-year-old Marine Corps rifleman who worked with the Navy over a period of years, went into assaulted-forth-Rhode Island. So I personally recognize the absolute need, the uncompromising need, to ensure the best available training, the best equipment, the best of support that this country can offer to U.S. soldiers, sailors, Marine Corps, and airmen.

I would like to work with the Committee on Armed Services and the chairman and the ranking member. Over the next several months, the Committee on Resources will be reauthorizing the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The language in the defense authorization bill dealing with the marine mammals was something that we worked out. The language that is in the defense bill now, I think, goes beyond what is necessary. There are some issues dealing with small numbers versus negligible numbers. There are some issues dealing with confined geographic areas. There are issues dealing with permits. There are issues with civilian scientific research.

I think the model can use for the marine mammals and the Marine training is laid out before us in this thing called INRMPs, Integrated National Resources Management Plans, that there is consultation, there is collaboration with the Committee on Resources and the other agencies throughout the Federal Government. That model that deals with INRMPs, that assures those guys on the ground, that young 19-year-old rifleman, is going to get the best training, no compromise on that. And I would like to work with the Committee on Armed Services to deal with those issues over the next several months.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN).

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time. I rise to express my opposition to the conference report on the Department of Defense Authorization Bill. I want to pick up with where the last speaker finished. He said he thought in this bill they went a little further than was necessary in the area of the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act. All I want to say is that I believe to be the case, that the problem with this bill is that it has been hijacked by the Republican leadership and the White House, who insisted on provisions that weakened environmental laws. I want to say what I believe are the three main things that this bill does.

I am also the ranking member of the Committee on Government Reform, and I have worked on civil service and personnel issues for many years to try to ensure that our civil service laws reflect the will of the American people and of the Congress. This bill is the antithesis of what we are trying to do.

Senator COLLINS developed a bipartisan compromise that safeguarded the collective bargaining rights of 700,000 Department of Defense employees, yet gave the Department much of its old flexibility back. This bill abandons that compromise. This bill makes a mockery of labor relations at the Defense Department. At the same time that the bill claims to protect collective bargaining, it allows DOD to waive these requirements for the next 6 years. During these 6 years, the Department can run rough-shod over its unions. The Department can decide what issues will be bargained, how labor and management impasses will be resolved and whether it will discriminate against union members.

This bill also makes it harder for DOD employees to gain redress for unfair treatment. Currently employees have the ability to file appeals with the independent Merit Systems Protection Board, but under this bill employees first would have to go through an internal DOD appeals process. An administration that says it is against bureaucracy and red tape wants to create so much bureaucracy for employee appeals that it would simply give up trying to protect their rights.

The bill removes requirements for DOD employees to receive overtime pay or pay for working on holidays or weekends. This is ironic, since both the House and the Senate recently voted to protect overtime pay for private sector employees.

As the illegal efforts in Iraq have demonstrated, DOD employees do not work only Monday through Friday, 9 to 5. Frankly, it is shameful that Congress is going to give those employees who safeguard our national security less overtime protection than it gives private sector employees.

Finally, I have concerns about some of the provisions dealing with government-wide procurement policy. In particular, the bill extends to all civilian agencies something known as “other transaction authority” for research and development projects related to defense against terrorism. This would essentially waive all Federal procurement laws for these contracts. The bill would change our procurement rules for contracts related to other anti-terrorism products and services.

It is wrong to take important must-pass legislation like the DOD authorization and load it up with policies that damage the environment and strip employees of basic rights, but that is what this bill is doing, and I am going to urge my colleagues to oppose it.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES).

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina for her leadership and appreciate her yielding me time.

Let me say that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRIKIS) for 18 years in this Congress supported legislation that would give concurrent receipt to our veterans; 18 years. People in this Chamber need to know that, because there are people here who have been present during that time, and during that time the people who are now saying that the Republican Congress supports our veterans need to remind themselves that not a one of them joined sponsorship for his bill while that was there.

Since I came to Congress, Mr. Speaker, I have been working to strengthen the Berry Amendment to help ensure that the Department of Defense use American manufacturers and products in its procurement programs. This past spring, and this good rule supports these efforts, I became very concerned when there was a blanket waiver issued for commercial aircraft.

Among other products, this largely jeopardizes our domestic titanium industry. The number of domestic contractors that now comprise this industrial base has shrunk to three domestic producers of titanium. Maintaining this base is not only vital for our economy, but also our national security. We simply cannot be relying on the Russians and Chinese, who are developing their own economies, to supply significant amounts of titanium for our Nation’s defense.
The gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) has been tenacious in working to make sure that our industrial defense base is strengthened, not protected, strengthened, so that our national security is foremost. I would like to yield to the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) for his comments on this issue.

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

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

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, and we are going to describe during the general debate the great industrial base provisions, like the machine tool provision that we came out of this conference with, some excellent stuff.

But with respect to titanium, we know that we have three major makers of titanium left in this country. Otherwise, you have to rely on foreign sources, and that is an abomination. This is a great rule. It is for our national security is foremost. Our industrial defense base is strengthened, in working to make sure that our industrial defense base is strengthened, and we need to work to try and deal with them as we proceed in this session of Congress.

I want to rise in very strong support of the provision my friend the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIARHT) talked about, the question of tankers. I became interested in this issue several years ago with a visit to Tinker Air Force Base where we saw the condition of our KC-135Es. I believe that this is a crucial national priority, to undersized tanker replacement program started.

The Air Force has chosen the 767. We have had a lot of controversy about whether we should buy or lease. We have come up with a compromise with the Secretary of Defense, and I am grateful. On Thursday, which brought us together, I want to commend the Speaker, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), for their leadership, for their initiative on this issue. Without his tremendous effort and tenacity, we would not have gotten this far.

I intend to have a colloquy later with the chairman of the committee when we get to the authorization bill on this matter, but I just want to say that I want to compliment everyone who has worked on this. For 2 years, we had to get an effort under way to get this replacement effort going.

Not to undersize it, every single plane that flew into Afghanistan and into Iraq had to be refueled multiple times. Our whole effort to improve our bomber capability with the B-2 and smart weapons and all of the aircraft coming off of our carriers, Navy and Marine Corps aircraft, all of them had to be refueled multiple times. So you do not get anything done without tankers.

We have planes now, 544 of them, that were built between 1957 and 1963. These are very old aircraft. We have serious corrosion problems, and I am glad that this conference committee was able to come together and put together a package in that the administration has said they will make it work.

I believe this is one of the most important things we can do. If you think about it, tankers and the EA-6B, which are in terrible condition, are two weapons systems that have become absolutely fundamental to our U.S. ability to project power around the world. I am glad we can get this tanker thing moving forward and that it is in this bill.

I appreciate the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for their leadership on this issue.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I reserve my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE).

(Mr. INSLEE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report and this rule. I have concerns about this bill, too. I represent the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Keyport, Bangor. Many of these work rules are very much deplored by the workers there, and I regret that they have been attached to this bill. I think we should get down to work to try and deal with them as we proceed in this session of Congress.

I want to rise in very strong support of the provision my friend the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIARHT) talked about, the question of tankers. I became interested in this issue several years ago with a visit to Tinker Air Force Base where we saw the condition of our KC-135Es. I believe that this is a crucial national priority, to undersized tanker replacement program started.

The Air Force has chosen the 767. We have had a lot of controversy about whether we should buy or lease. We have come up with a compromise with the Secretary of Defense. On Thursday, which brought us together, I want to commend the Speaker, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), for their leadership, for their initiative on this issue. Without his tremendous effort and tenacity, we would not have gotten this far.

I intend to have a colloquy later with the chairman of the committee when we get to the authorization bill on this matter, but I just want to say that I want to compliment everyone who has worked on this. For 2 years, we had to get an effort under way to get this replacement effort going.

Not to undersize it, every single plane that flew into Afghanistan and into Iraq had to be refueled multiple times. Our whole effort to improve our bomber capability with the B-2 and smart weapons and all of the aircraft coming off of our carriers, Navy and Marine Corps aircraft, all of them had to be refueled multiple times. So you do not get anything done without tankers.

We have planes now, 544 of them, that were built between 1957 and 1963. These are very old aircraft. We have serious corrosion problems, and I am glad that this conference committee was able to come together and put together a package in that the administration has said they will make it work.

I believe this is one of the most important things we can do. If you think about it, tankers and the EA-6B, which are in terrible condition, are two weapons systems that have become absolutely fundamental to our U.S. ability to project power around the world. I am glad we can get this tanker thing moving forward and that it is in this bill.

I appreciate the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for their leadership on this issue.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I reserve my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE).

(Mr. INSLEE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my deep disappointment at the failure to deal with chal-
(Mr. BLUNT), and so many others who worked on this to make sure that we get concurrent receipt resolved.

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

I would only point out to the previous speaker and to speakers on the other side that if the Republicans in the House were willing to forego a little bit of the tax cuts for the wealthy, we could fully fund concurrent receipts, rather than just partially funding concurrent receipts.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of this rule and adoption of this conference report.

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

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

I want to again thank the chairman and ranking member of this committee for the good work they have done in bringing this bill forward. It is a good bill at the right time in history to help our men and women and to be sure that we are doing all we can in this war on terrorism.

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.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 437, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 1598), to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2004 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Speaker pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 437, the conference report is considered as having been read.

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

Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank all of my colleagues who participated in putting this bill together from the earliest hearing that we had early in the year on the threat that America faces, on the status of our Armed Forces, and on what we need to do to give the President and our troops the tools to get the job done. My partner, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), is every bit a 50-50 partner in this operation, Mr. Speaker. When we really get down to what it takes to protect our freedom, there are no Republicans or Democrats, and we have a very bipartisan committee, and I am proud of that. I want to thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) as not just a friend, but a real full partner in helping to shape America's defenses, along with chairman and members on the Democrat side on the Committee on Armed Services and, of course, our great, great folks on the Republican side, along with the subcommittee chairmen and ranking members who have done such a great job.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have a new era. This is an era of what I would call terrorists with high technology; and probably Jim Woolsey said it best when he said we have killed the big dragon, that is, we have disassembled the Soviet Union, but there are lots of poisonous snakes out there, and we are seeing those poisonous snakes and the effect of their bites every day around the world, not just in the theatres in Afghanistan and Iraq, but elsewhere. And we think we killed American people since 9-11 still have an acute understanding of the venom and the poison that is manifest in that capability of our adversaries in this new era of terrorists with high technology.

Our job is to put military power, and our job is further, in meeting that threat, to shape the U.S. military and our defense apparatus to meet the threat, to defeat it, and to equip it; to give it the tools that it needs to do its job most effectively, and this bill does that, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to talk about a number of issues with respect to this bill. This is a sweeping bill; and it does a number of reforms, a number of changes, a number of things that I think are important to change our military as we move into this new era.

Let me talk about, first just talk about the last subject that came up during the rule, and that is the tanker deal. The chairman and I have an agreement is in this bill. Let me tell my colleagues a little bit about that.

First, anyone who does a security analysis or a briefing on potential threats around this world and present threats understands that tankers are extremely important. I just might add that I undertook a series of classified and unclassified briefings, as have most members of the Committee on Armed Services over the last many years, and we have then gone on to say that our major ability to project power is American air power.

Whether we are talking about B-2 bombers that can fly literally from Whiteman Air Base to strike a target in Kosovo with precision munitions, or talking about tactical aircraft flying off a carrier and hitting targets in Afghanistan or Iraq, we need tankers. Tankers, that big gas station in the sky that the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) talked about, are necessary to project American air power.

If we want to hold our power and, specifically, if we have stealth, and we couple that stealth with precision munitions, that is, instead of carpet-bombing a bridge, we send in that one precision munition, it hits one strut on that bridge and brings the whole bridge down, if we have that combination and we have the legs to get it there over the target in whatever remote part of the world we are operating in, we can drive those military forces, and we can drive them in a blitzkrieg attack against the enemy target, whether it is enemy forces surrounding Baghdad or some other area of the world; and Americans now understand that.

So we have to have tankers. If we do scenarios around the world, every single scenario requires lots of American tankers and, I might say, Mr. Speaker, more than we have now, newer than we have now, more capable than we have now. That is the reason we are putting the tanker deal together, and that is the reason that this is being carried in this bill.

Now, let me tell my colleagues, with respect to personnel, we have had some arm wrestling over this. But I think that the guy with whom we are trusting millions of young American lives, the Secretary of Defense, can be trusted with reshaping our personnel system in the Department of Defense to be more effective, and I think be more rewarding for those workers. I think they like the idea that we are going to be able to hire people right out of that job fair instead of telling them, the job most effectively, and this bill does that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to talk about, first, just talk about the last subject that came up during the rule, and that is the tanker deal. The chairman and I have an agreement is in this bill. Let me tell my colleagues a little bit about that.

First, anyone who does a security analysis or a briefing on potential threats around this world and present threats understands that tankers are extremely important. I just might add that I undertook a series of classified and unclassified briefings, as have most members of the Committee on Armed Services over the last many years, and we have then gone on to say that our major ability to project power is American air power.

Whether we are talking about B-2 bombers that can fly literally from Whiteman Air Base to strike a target in Kosovo with precision munitions, or talking about tactical aircraft flying off a carrier and hitting targets in Afghanistan or Iraq, we need tankers. Tankers, that big gas station in the sky that the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) talked about, are necessary to project American air power.

Whether we are talking about B-2 bombers that can fly literally from Whiteman Air Base to strike a target in Kosovo with precision munitions, or talking about tactical aircraft flying off a carrier and hitting targets in Afghanistan or Iraq, we need tankers. Tankers, that big gas station in the sky that the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) talked about, are necessary to project American air power.

So we have to have tankers. If we do scenarios around the world, every single scenario requires lots of American tankers and, I might say, Mr. Speaker, more than we have now, newer than we have now, more capable than we have now. That is the reason we are putting the tanker deal together, and that is the reason that this is being carried in this bill.

Now, let me tell my colleagues, with respect to personnel, we have had some arm wrestling over this. But I think that the guy with whom we are trusting millions of young American lives, the Secretary of Defense, can be trusted with reshaping our personnel system in the Department of Defense to be more effective, and I think be more rewarding for those workers. I think they like the idea that we are going to be able to hire people right out of that job fair instead of telling them, the job most effectively, and this bill does that, Mr. Speaker.

Federal to train, Mr. Speaker, we have talked about that. We have to give our young people the freedom to train, and once we make that agreement that the bird hatchery is going to be over here and the rifle range is going to be over here, we cannot let them down and go and tell them, get a job, and then go up and hire people. The Federal Government can hire you, while IBM and the private concerns are picking them up immediately. I like the idea that they are going to be able to be qualified for a job within a few days instead of after 3 or 4 months of bureaucracy, and that will allow them to take jobs that military people are doing now. When we have tested these things in places like China Lake, a majority of the workers, the workers have voted that they like this new system, the new flexible system. This is an important new part of shaping the military.

So I think that is good.

Freedom to train, Mr. Speaker, we have talked about that. We have to give our young people the freedom to train, and once we make that agreement that the bird hatchery is going to be over here and the rifle range is going to be over here, we cannot let them down and go and tell them, get a job, and then go up and hire people. The Federal Government can hire you, while IBM and the private concerns are picking them up immediately. I like the idea that they are going to be able to be qualified for a job within a few days instead of after 3 or 4 months of bureaucracy, and that will allow them to take jobs that military people are doing now. When we have tested these things in places like China Lake, a majority of the workers, the workers have voted that they like this new system, the new flexible system. This is an important new part of shaping the military.

So I think that is good.
country, and the centerpiece of this is what I think is the centerpiece of American production. The machine tool industry of this country, which used to be second to none. We have a provision in this bill, it is not a mandatory provision. It is not a foreign money tool; you are going to get points in the competition. And I think that is going to incent people to invest some of our companies, big and small, to say instead of looking at another foreign-made machine tool, let us call up that American company and see what they have. Maybe we can use that machine tool. And that is going to, I believe, Mr. Speaker, start to bring back this base of machine tools upon which a lot of our defense manufacturing capability was founded. We do a lot of other great things in our industrial-based provisions, Mr. Speaker; but that is the centerpiece, and I think it is a very important foundation.

Now, we also reauthorize for 10 years the mixed program. This is a program that brings in the strong right arm of America’s maritime unions and makes sure that they are the ones that are moving men and material across the ocean into theaters of action. We want to have people going to rental operations where we are taking unions and working people from other countries and having to rely on foreign personnel to move the wherewithal for military victories around the world. That is what is going to bring our maritime unions, our shipbuilders, and our maritime operators back into pre-eminence; and we have worked hard on that, Mr. Speaker, and that is a great aspect of this bill.

Concurrent receipt is very important, Mr. Speaker. We started out last year by saying people who are actually hit in combat, people who have won the Purple Heart, are going to get now two checks. They get the full check for everything that they have been disabled for, all of their disability, and they get the full check for their retirement for everything that they have done to serve the U.S. military. We now also say, and incidentally, I see the gentleman from New York (Mr. McHugh) here, we have a subcommittee on Total Force, who very much has been a leader in putting this thing together. We also now are going to give full concurrent receipt, that is that full disability check, to all of those people who are wounded in the combat area or who are disabled or hurt in the combat area, who are hurt or disabled while training for combat. Maybe that guy who is jumping out at the 82nd Airborne, with the 82nd Airborne, people who are wounded as they are going to get it; and also people who are hit by instrumentality of combat, like people who are hit by agent orange, Mr. Speaker. Then we go to the entire population of veterans who were not hurt in combat, were not hit by enemy bullets, were not hurt while training for combat but, nonetheless, have disabilities. And all of those people who are over 50 percent, Mr. Speaker, are going to get this right.

Now, that is going to bring in about 250,000 people, new people into the system. It is a big, big victory for veterans. It is a wonderful thing.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say, too, along with the gentleman from New York (Mr. McHugh), the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Bilirakis), obviously, the guy that I call the father of concurrent receipt, it has been a big part of his career. And the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Smith), the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. Blunt), lots of great people; I might say that Senator Warner also, working on Purple Heart Plus last year, had a good hand in starting to put this thing together, lots and lots of people. Lots of our veterans and their families in this House have been involved in putting this program together. This is a great program.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great bill. It is a far-reaching bill. It gives the President and the Chiefs of Staff the job to do. Let us pass this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.
Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), who is chairman of the Subcommittee on Unconventional Warfare, Terrorism and Capabilities and oversees these very important special operations forces that are doing such a great job for our country. (Mr. SAXTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking and commending the chairman of the committee, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), for the great bipartisan job that has occurred in bringing this bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1588 and do so with a great deal of pride after a lengthy but productive conference. The conferences have hammered out an excellent bill that will go a long way in enhancing our national security and providing our troops and their families with the assets they need.

I have the honor of chairing, as the chairman said, the new Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Warfare, and Capabilities on the Committee on Armed Services. As many in this body know, I have worked for many years to stand up such a subcommittee, and with good reason, for there is much that this Subcommittee needs to accomplish.

The Subcommittee’s ranking Democrat, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN), and I have worked hard together to explore a multitude of ways to provide the Department of Defense with the capabilities to defeat and defend against terrorists at home as well as abroad, and many of these ideas are contained in the conference report before you.

For example, the conference report includes many provisions that will prepare our Armed Forces and, in particular, the Special Operations Command, to combat terrorism worldwide as well as several items that will enhance homeland defense. In addition, the conference report establishes several programs addressing issues that arose in the recent war with Iraq and items that will speed the transformation of the military services.

It is critically important that all Members support this measure. This measure is much to applaud in many areas. I am proud to be a conferee and proud of the work that the chairman, and my good friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), as I said before, and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) did in this regard. They have set a standard for us, and this is a bill which must be passed, hopefully with a very good vote.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to myself.

Mr. Speaker, last night, yesterday in Iraq 7 brave young Americans died. This is the committee that makes the decisions to arm those people, to pay those people, take care of their families, and to take care of their injuries when they get home. And, so, as earlier this year I voted to send those young people to Iraq, I share in the responsibility and for those things that go wrong, for this I stand. For that I am responsible.

Having said that, although I have grave reservations about parts of this bill, I will be supporting it because they deserve to be paid, they deserve a pay increase, they deserve the better weapons, the better ships that are in this bill. For the handful of things that trouble me greatly.

Number one is the Bush administration’s insistence on another round of base closures. Anyone in this body knows, who has taken the time to look at it, knows the United States Army is too small, that the entire United States Army is spoken for. If they are not deployed, they are getting ready to be deployed. So how on earth can we close one base out of four as the Bush administration wants to do. The fleet is too small, 295 ships. Again, how can we close one Navy port out of four if the fleet is too small?

If the Bush administration truly thinks the base closures is a good idea, then it should have the courage to announce which bases they want to close prior to the Presidential election and not after in 2005. I think it just stands to reason. You do not hear Congressional men saying let us close bases. I cannot find one Admiral or General who is saying let us close bases. I cannot find one Admiral or General who will name one base that should be closed.

So if the Bush administration wants to close bases, let them do it prior to the Presidential election.

Second thing is, Mr. President, for the sake of those people fighting, let us pay for this war. This supplemental, and I am going to vote for it, is going to spend $400 billion for our Nation’s defense.

A couple weeks ago we had a supplemental for $87 billion, earlier in the year another supplemental for $79 billion. That adds up to about $565 billion. Every penny of that is borrowed. It is borrowed from the Social Security Trust Fund. It is borrowed from the Medicare Trust Fund. It is borrowed from the military retirees trust fund. It is borrowed from the civil service men’s retirement trust fund. It is borrowed from the communist Chinese, and it is borrowed from average Americans.

See, those of us who were lucky enough not to have to fight this war ought to at least be willing to pay for it and not stick the brave young men and women who are still coming home from this deployment with the bill. Every other generation of Americans tried to pay their own bills during wartime. This generation of Americans passed the buck to somebody else, and it is wrong.

So for the sake of the great young men and women who are serving our country in the Army and the Navy, the Air Force, Marines, those great Guardsmen and Reservists who are being pulled away from their families to serve as we speak, and a young person from Mississippi who was a Guardsman died just yesterday, I am going to vote for this bill. And I ask my colleagues to let us do this in the future in a more sensible way.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH), who has a high responsibility of overseeing the total force, the Reserve, the Guard, Active, our Reserve, with respect to all the personnel issues, pay, personnel issues, family benefits, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Total Force.

(Mr. MCHUGH asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), for his gracious comments and for his courageous leadership in shaping this bill, but also day in and day out.

I think it is obvious there are a couple lessons we can learn from this bill. One is an old lesson, and that is happily this is one of, if not the most, bipartisan legislation the Congress, and that is so critical in times such as these. We have heard the gracious comments and enlightened comments of the ranking member, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), and I want to thank my ranking member, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER), for his partnership in our portion on this mark, and all of the members of the committee on both sides of the aisle. But I give a special tip of the hat to our chairman who, in a very difficult time was experiencing personal loss, the loss of his private home during the California fires, still kept a focus on this vital piece of legislation.

The second lesson is that important as all the military is, the troops are key. And you have heard my colleagues comment about the positive things in this bill, active industry, the increases for the Army in difficult times, similar end strength increases for the Guard and Reserve, for those good citizen soldiers the military pay raise average 4.1 percent, the imminent danger and family separation allowances at these difficult times. But I want to focus on something else.

The third lesson of this bill is we always want to do better, but I would note to my colleagues who have concerns that this is a program that has been in place since the Civil War era. And until all of these work together over the last several years, there had never been a change in it.

With this bill today we will have started at 35,000 troops, veterans who are receiving full concurrent receipt, and we will have expanded that to a couple quarters of a quarter of a quarter of a quarter of that, that is progress, $22 billion. So we will continue to fight to do better, but this is amazing progress for more than 160
years when nothing had been done, and I urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the conference report on H.R. 1588, a wartime bill that directly addresses committee concerns about the inadequacy of military manpower and the damaging effects of excessive operations and personnel tempo.

H.R. 1588 also reflects the House Armed Services Committee’s belief in the need to be proactive in military personnel policy and pay matters so as to sustain the commitment and professionalism of the men and women of America’s magnificent all-voluntary armed services, and the families that support them.

Finally, H.R. 1588 contains legislative and funding initiatives to enhance the ability of the active, National Guard and reserves to operate as an integrated total force.

Among the more important provisions of H.R. 1588 are:

- Active end strength increases of 2,400 for the Army, with an additional $68 million to support the increases;
- Growth in selected reserve and full-time National Guard and reserve strengths;
- Military pay raises that average 4.1 percent;
- Continued increases in imminent danger pay and family separation allowances.

A significant expansion of concurrent receipt that will when implemented mean that benefit more than 250,000 military retirees.

- Commissaries and exchange provisions to better define and protect those important benefits;
- OD&C health care improvements, to include expanded health care coverage of the National Guard and reserves, and
- Expanded and expedited naturalization procedures for active and reserve component personnel.

None of these great outcomes is achieved in a vacuum. The conference report before you is a bi-partisan measure, reflecting the active input and involvement of committee members, as well as the leadership and judgment of Chairman DUNCAN HUNTER and Representative I KE S KELTON, the committee’s ranking Democrat.

H.R. 1588 is a very good bill that addresses a range of needs of our wartime military. I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. S KELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER.)

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, as the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Total Force I rise in support of this conference report. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the chairman of the Subcommittee on Total Force, the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH), for his leadership and also to thank the committee chairman, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. S keleton), for their many years and efforts that have resulted once again in a conference agreement coming to the floor.

This bill continues several years of improvements to quality of life programs for our military personnel, retirees, and their families. We provided an additional targeted pay raise of up to 3.7 percent and additional targeted pay increases for mid-career and senior enlisted personnel.

We fixed a problem for our reservists who were called up after September 11 and were forced to pay their lodging expenses when they went home on leave. We extended the increase in imminent danger pay to $225 and family separation allowances to $250 until the end of next year. Our service members are still in conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan and face months of separation from their loved ones. These increases are necessary and deserved.

We increased access to TRICARE benefits for reservists and their families. We expanded commissary access to selected reservists and Reserve retirees under 60.

We allow individuals who volunteer to defend our Nation but are not U.S. citizens to become naturalized after 1 year of service. We also allow their families to become naturalized if a service member is killed in action.

I want to thank the committee that the committee was not able to include full concurrent receipt. Approximately 60 percent of Arkansas disabled veterans who are currently penalized by current law will not be helped by this compromise. We should do better.

While I am supporting this bill, the process that brought us here is not good. The bipartisanship for which our committee has been known is slowly vanishing. The responsibility to provide for our Nation’s defense and security is an area in which partisanship should be minimized, particularly at a time of war.

Sadly, it is becoming clear that this partisanship is becoming the norm in the way we conduct business. Both Democrats and Republicans have a duty and obligation to protect our citizens and the freedom Americans enjoy.

We need to work together in a bipartisan fashion to ensure that our rights and freedoms are preserved for future generations.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS.)

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, (Mr. DICKS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to enter into a colloquy with the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. Chairman, the conference report on H.R. 1588, the Fiscal Year 2004 Defense Authorization Act, contains a provision, section 135, which authorizes the Air Force to enter into a contract for 100 tanker aircraft under the terms and conditions of section 8159 of the Fiscal Year 2002 Defense Appropriations Act.

Mr. Chairman, the conference report on H.R. 1588, the Fiscal Year 2004 Defense Authorization Act, contains a provision, section 135, which authorizes the Air Force to enter into a contract for 100 tanker aircraft under the terms and conditions of section 8159 of the Fiscal Year 2002 Defense Appropriations Act.

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

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

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is correct. The conferees in their joint report language agree that this section would “authorize the Secretary to enter into a multi-year procurement program, using incremental funding.” This language indicates that the multi-year procurement program authorized by section 135 would allow the Air Force to make payments as agreed to in the contract and that the Air Force would not be required to have the full funding authority required to purchase an aircraft in order to place an order for that aircraft under the contract.

Mr. DICKS. We thank the chairman for his hard work on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, the letter sent to the Committee on Armed Services by Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz is as follows:
One hundred sixty Republicans in this House have co-sponsored the Bilirakis bill to fully repeal the disabled veterans tax. Unfortunately, only two of those 160 Republicans have signed the discharge petition to require a vote on that bill.

Well, today there is a second chance to do what is right for veterans. By voting yes on the motion to recommit, we can repeal the disabled veterans tax. If just a few of the 160 will join with Democrats, we can repeal the disabled veterans tax fully and we can do it today. We can keep the promise we made to veterans when we co-sponsored the Bilirakis bill.

Keeping promises and leaving no troops behind, those are quintessential American values. On the eve of Veterans Day, let us apply those American values to the treatment of our veterans. Our promise to veterans should be more important than Republican Party loyalty, the party that voted to recommit. Vote yes to keep our promises to America’s veterans.

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

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Subcommittee on Projection Forces, I am pleased to highlight the issues within the jurisdiction of our committee.

This conference report increases the requested authorization for programs within the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Projection Forces by $1.3 billion to $30 billion dollars. Authorization is included for the administration’s request of one Virginia class submarine, 3 DDG–51 destroyers, one LPD–17 amphibious assault ship, and two cargo and ammunition ships.

Additional authorizations of $75 million for advanced procurement of LPD–17 and $248 million for SSN refueling overhaul are also included. Our conference report addresses 100 aircraft KC–767 Air Force proposed lease program by restricting the lease portion of the program to 20 aircraft, requiring the Air Force budget to procure the remaining 80 aircraft. This approach will save the taxpayer at least $2 billion over the originally-proposed program.

We have also taken several initiatives to bolster important requirements of the Department of Defense. An additional $20 million to sustain a force structure of 83 B-1s, 23 aircraft above the level planned; and an additional $208 million for Tomahawk missiles, an additional $40 million for the Affordable Weapon, an additional $100 million bomber R&D initiative for the next generation, follow-on stealth, deep strike bomber.

In addition, the recommended mark includes advance procurement legislative proposals. First, a one-year procurement authorization for several programs. Second, a limitation on C–5A aircraft requirement. Third, an electromagnetic gun initiative. Fourth, a requirement that the Secretary of Defense complete two independent studies on potential future fleet architectures for the Navy.

In conclusion, I urge my colleagues to support the conference report. I would like to thank the distinguished member of the Committee on Armed Services for yielding me time and for his great services to our country throughout his whole life which continues here in Congress. As a member, himself, his service on the Committee on Armed Services is very informed and we thank him and recognize his leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the commitment of our Nation’s veterans. We will have a motion to recommit, as has been indicated, and it is to support our veterans.

No group of Americans has stood stronger and braver for our Nation than our troops and our veterans. From the bitter cold winter at Valley Forge to the boiling hot Iraqi terrain, our soldiers have courageously answered when called, gone where ordered, and defended our Nation with honor.

As a Nation we have a sacred pact with those who have served us in uniform. They have taken care of us and, in turn, we will also take care of them. That is our solemn pledge.

Today, just before Veterans Day, we stand on the floor of the House of Representatives prepared to vote on the Department of Defense authorization conference report. And on this day we have young men and women, the sons and daughters of America on the ground, engaged in war in Iraq. We salute them for their courage, their patriotism and the sacrifice they are willing to make for our country. But this bill in many respects does not honor their service.

Democrats are fighting to live up to our promise to our veterans by ending the unfair practice of the disabled veterans tax. The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. MARSHALL) will be offering the motion to recommit to this effect. He is leading our fight for a complete and total repeal of the disabled veterans tax for all of our veterans. We have made this long-standing issue too hot to handle for the Republicans and they have offered a proposal in today’s conference report in response. Their proposal is a step, but it is not nearly good enough.
The Republicans have put forth a proposal that leaves far too many veterans behind. Under their Republican proposal, two-thirds of our veterans, two-thirds of our veterans still will not receive one penny of compensation for their disabilities.

The Republican deal will address the tax for some veterans but not for others. For the select few it does address, the tax may not fully end for them for 10 years. Many of these are veterans of World War II. Ten years is a long time to wait in any event, but especially if you are a World War II vet. That is not good enough.

America’s veterans deserve better. On the battlefield of war our soldiers pledge to leave no one behind. As a Nation, it must be our pledge that after our soldiers come home we will leave no veteran behind. Our veterans served for all of us. We must be there for all of them.

In June, Democrats launched a discharge petition to give Members a chance to vote to end completely the disabled veterans tax for all military retirees. Two hundred and three Members, 201 Democrats, only 2 Republicans, signed the discharge petition, despite the fact that 190 Republicans have co-sponsored the legislation. So we know that our Republican colleagues believe that this is the right course of action. Democrats are giving you a way to honor our own commitment. The thing to do was obvious then when this discharge petition was signed to completely end the disabled veterans tax.

The right thing to do today, just before Veterans Day, is also obvious. Vote to recommit this bill with instructions to strip out the failed Republican language on disabled veterans tax and add the Democratic language to completely and totally end the disabled veterans tax. Indeed, this language is one of the amendments from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), a distinguished member of the Republican Caucus.

The current language again leaves two-thirds of our vets behind. The Democratic motion to recommit leaves no veteran behind. We have a moral obligation to those who have paid the high price for our freedom, those who have worn our Nation’s uniform. Our words must be as bold as their deeds, and we must honor what they have done for our country.

So let us give a great gift to our veterans on this Veterans Day. I urge my colleagues to honor our veterans service and vote yes when the opportunity comes for the motion to recommit.

Mr. HEFFLEY, Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 3½ minutes.

Let me just respond just a second to the gentleman who just spoke. The Democrats controlled this House for 40 years, and I went to Senator Bolenbacher, who was chairman of the Committee on Veterans Affairs, and I asked him years ago, why do we not do something about this concurrent receipt thing? And he said, we are not doing anything about that concurrent receipt and we are never doing anything about that concurrent receipt.

They had a Democrat President. They had a Democrat Senate. They had a Democrat House. They could have stopped concurrent receipt, but they did not, and now we get this phony posturing after a deal has been worked out to really try to deal with the problem. I think that is a cheap shot, Mr. Chairman. But that is not why I rise today.

I rise to support H.R. 1588, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004. We are a Nation engaged in an ongoing global war on terrorism. American soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines are deployed all over the world in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The bill supports all of our service members who are fighting terrorism and defending our homeland.

H.R. 1588 strikes a careful balance between ensuring that our military is able to train in a realistic manner while still maintaining the safety of the environment. The bill amends the Marine Mammal Protection Act so that it can be read and implemented in a common sense fashion. The Navy, for example, will now be able use new sonar technology vital to the protection of U.S. ships, submarines and global interests, without harming marine mammals.

The bill also changes the Endangered Species Act to ensure that military training lands are used for their primary purpose, to train America’s troops in realistic environments. These changes will protect the environment and also enhance the readiness of our military personnel.

H.R. 1588 also recognizes that the military services will face significant challenges and equipment return home from war. The level of effort necessary to resurge this equipment at our maintenance depots will be extraordinary. This conference report recognizes these consequences and includes additional funding for key readiness accounts.

The bill includes $9.7 billion for military construction and family housing projects around the world. This is an increase in the President’s budget of more than $420 million, with additional funds targeted at projects to improve the facilities in which America’s service members live, work, train and operate. Such projects are extraordinarily important to the quality of life for our military personnel and their families, as well as U.S. military readiness.

The National Security Personnel System established in this bill will provide the Secretary of Defense flexibility to hire, fire and promote a more agile workforce; the authority to tie pay to performance; increased ability to cluster pay and allowances; and a better basis on which to establish a labor relations system.

The new personnel system will also ensure that employee representatives are included in the planning, development, and implementing of new human resources management systems. There also will be a separate process to ensure that employee representatives participate in the development and implementation of a new management relations system.

There are some things that did not get in this that we were beat back on in this legislation. I believe BRAC provisions were one that I wish were changed. I think the firefighting provisions were very important to be changed; but, in balance, H.R. 1588 will make real improvements in U.S. military readiness and ensure the continued strength of U.S. Armed Forces for years to come, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, with a defense budget of $400 billion and an enormous defense budget, it is easy to bring a conference to closure, and I commend the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), as well as the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), for what they have achieved. In support of H.R. 1588, the conference report thereon, but I have some real concerns. First of all, I have already spoken to the failure of the underlying bill to accrue properly the budget authority that will be necessary to fund the Department of Defense, the concurrent receipt or the provisions for lease purchase of 100 tankers. I am concerned about the radical reform of civil service laws in the Department of Defense and the dispensation this bill gives to the Department of Defense from environmental laws that apply to everybody else. Also, I am concerned about the new and cumbersome stricures on cooperative threat reduction.

I am particularly disappointed in the provisions of this report that deal with low-level nuclear weapons. I believe the conference should have stuck with the bipartisan compromise reached by the Committee on Armed Services and set forth in the defense bill that we passed in May. That compromise was sound enough that in July of this year when I offered a motion to instruct, those provisions were accepted and upheld by the House without dissent.

The administration began this year by stepping up its push for repeal on a ban of low-level nuclear weapons research and development, a ban which has been in the law for 10 years. There was little opposition here to broadening research into low-yield nuclear weapons, but there was bipartisan concern for continuing the ban to run into the new administration.

And so both the House and Senate authorization bills proposed changes to allow research into
low-yield nuclear weapons, but restricted any move into engineering development.

The Senate, on the other hand, repealed the so-called Spratt-Furse amendment entirely, but then backed off the language requiring specific congressional authorization to move into development of any advanced nuclear concept project. These are the provisions included in the House compromise.

By contrast, the House version amended existing law rather than repealing it. We explicitly authorized research, but we maintained a bar on development beyond detailed feasibility studies, the so-called 6.2a level of research and development.

Our compromise may have similar in consequences to the Senate approach, but I think it was superior in form because it makes clear that it is the policy of the United States not to develop low-yield tactical nuclear weapons. The House compromise, thus, gives stronger assurance that Congress will be an equal partner in that policy is reversed, if that decision is taken, and if there is beyond research.

When we adopted the Spratt-Furse amendment in the early 1990s, it came in the wake of an issue taken by the first President Bush whereby we withdrew a number of tactical nuclear weapons from Europe and the Soviets responded in kind. This was a step back and a step forward for nuclear security throughout the world. This initiative helped us later on to persuade Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus to forswear the use of such weapons.

If today the United States should move toward renewed development of nuclear weapons, especially weapons designed to be more usable due to their low-yield warheads, it sends the wrong signal.

Mr. Speaker, I support the conference report because it does many things I support, particularly for the quality of life for our troops, and also because I trust that the effect of the language in the report will be enough to forestall development of mini-nukes. I recommend support for the bill.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS), who is chairman of the Committee on Government Reform.

(Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, this legislation has a number of component parts, concurrent receipt. It has a $500 million human capital performance fund that will reward civil servants for outstanding performance, something we have never had before. This is a performance pay act element that will reform the way we buy and purchase services which can save literally billions of dollars for America's taxpayers, and it has a national security personnel system that we have created that will allow the Department of Defense to shed the shackles of its 50-year-old civil service structure, because when it comes to our civil service, the tradition of pre-service training and service has been its tradition. It is time for that to change.

Some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have come up with some statements on this that I think are off the mark. They have noted that this bill puts a strain on labor-management relations. This conference report includes chapter 7L the labor-management relations in the list of nonwaivable chapters in title V of the U.S. Code. The agreement sets up an extensive collaborative process that requires the Department to work side by side with the unions and employee groups in setting up the human resources management system for the Department of Defense. The agreement sets up an extensive collaborative process that requires the Department to work side by side with the unions in setting up the process in which management and labor work together in the future.

The second and third requirements are new in Federal law. No other agencies are required to coordinate with their employees, a good precedent.

Another gentleman said that the bill eliminates overtime pay for civilian employees. That is absolutely false. Overtime pay is not eliminated. The agreement, in addition to having $500 million in a human capital performance fund for civil servants who perform in an outstanding fashion, the agreement provides the Department the authority to improve the current provisions in law relating to overtime pay for some of the Department's most valuable employees. It asks for this language not to scrap overtime pay; instead, they are asking for authority not to be bound by the voluminous restrictions and requirements in title V that dictate how, when, and where DOD is authorized to administer overtime pay. This will allow the Department of Defense to move into the modern age.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN).

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield today in support of H.R. 1588, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004. I would like to thank the gentlemen from California (Chairman HUNTER) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member, for their hard work on this bill. I must, however, express my deep reservations with regards to what I see as the inadequacy of the concurrent receipt provision. This Congress is expanding concurrent receipt to only 30 percent of disabled retirees. Where is our commitment to all of our veterans? Congress must take action now to ensure that those veterans who will be deemed disabled will be granted their hard-earned retirement pay. All veteran retirees give at least 20 years of service to this country. They have stood ready to serve in times of war and times of peace. This country owes them more than a tax on the disability compensation.

I fear the partial phase-in of concurrent receipt will create two classes of veterans: those who will continue to suffer under the disabled veterans tax and those who will be deemed disabled enough to receive their compensation. Their sacrifice and service was equal. Congress should treat them with the same dignity and respect.

Whether being drafted into service or volunteering, every disabled veteran was prepared to give their last full measure. Each was prepared to demonstrate the ultimate commitment; yet Congress cannot even muster for them half a loaf.

Mr. Speaker, as we head home to observe Veterans' Day, this is no way to honor our veterans. To divide veterans into these have and have-nots is not fitting the sacrifice they gave our country 100 percent, whether in times of war or peace; and they deserve 100 percent of what they earned.

In closing, I will be supporting H.R. 1588, and I also will support the Marshall motion to recommit to expand concurrent receipt to all of our disabled veterans.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill. It is very important that for the first time in well over 40 years we do something about concurrent receipt.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the conference agreement on the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2004.

This is a solid bill that broadly serves our national security interests and addresses the needs of our armed forces as we continue the fight against terrorism. It shows the strength of its provisions in a minute. But first I want to thank you Chairman HUNTER and Ranking Member SKELTON for the leadership you have provided in putting this bill together. And I particularly want to recognize the ranking member of the Strategic Forces subcommittee, Mr. REYES, for his efforts on this bill. Together we have tackled some very tough issues.

The first long range missiles and nuclear weapons were developed almost 60 years ago. Yet today, we have no means to defend the territory of the United States against even a single long range missile, and have only recently begun to deploy defenses against the other range missile threats. In December of last year, the President announced his intention to enhance the capabilities of our Pacific missile defense test bed to fielding initial defensive operational capability to defend the territory of the United States by the end of fiscal year 2004. The President requested $9.1 billion to support that—and other—defense efforts.

I am pleased to report that this bill fully funds the request, providing the resources required to meet this great and historic challenge. The conferees have also agreed to shift...
funds from longer term, less mature efforts in order to accelerate near term fielding of systems like the Air Force's F/A-22 Raptor. The bill also provides funding to make our homeland safe by combating terrorism in the war on terror and continuing to develop a ballistic missile defense system.

Most important in this legislation, however, are the provisions aimed to benefit our current and past servicemembers. H.R. 1588 provides a 41 percent pay raise, and it increases imminent-danger pay. It also funds important military family housing, education and military facilities. H.R. 1588 directs improvements to the TRICARE system and survivor benefit, and it contains many other provisions for members of the National Guard and the Reserves.

I thank the chairman of the Subcommittee on Total Force, the gentleman from New York (Mr. McHugh), for his tremendous dedication to these quality-of-life issues.

This bill also recognizes the inherent unfairness that disabled military retirees have their retirement benefits offset by the amount of their disability benefits by providing concurrent receipt for more veterans than have ever been allowed before.

Finally, I thank the gentleman from California (Chairman Hunter) and the ranking member, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. Skelton), for not only their leadership of our committee but also for their work in shepherding this bill through the legislative process. They recognize that we owe all of our freedom and safety to our brave men and women in uniform and that Congress can help them in a major way with the passage of this bill. They also know how important this bill is to my district and Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, the home of the infantry where 37,000 active duty troops go to work every day.

In conclusion, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 1588.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. Hooley).

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference report, and I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. Skelton) for yielding me this time.

I am happy to see we are finally making some progress on eliminating the unfair disabled veteran tax. But it is not enough. We must keep working to ensure that no disabled veteran has to give up their hard-earned military retirement pay just because they earn disability compensation.

Under the Republican plan, veterans who are more than 50 percent disabled will begin to receive a benefit that will be phased in over the next 10 years; but this still leaves two-thirds of disabled veterans behind. In Oregon, 5,500 disabled veterans are currently penalized by this sick tax. Under this compromise, 2,000 veterans will receive some sort of relief at some point over the next 10 years, but the remaining 3,500 retired disabled veterans in Oregon who are currently penalized by this sick tax will receive no benefit under this Republican compromise.

While I am pleased we were able to take this first step, we cannot stop here. We must work to ensure that every disabled veteran who is disabled as a result of service to this country are able to receive the compensation they have earned and deserve. This is a promise we must keep.

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

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. Hoyer).

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, the conference report before us is one I will support. It will provide adequate pay, housing and training for the men and women serving our country on active duty and in the Guard and Reserves. It funds important modernization priorities that will ensure that the weapons with which we equip our troops are the most advanced and capable in the world for years to come.

I am sorry the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Davis) left the floor. He indicates 71 and some of the other articles that protect Federal employees will not be waived. That is technically true, but the bill allows them to be suspended for the next 10 years. So although they technically cannot be waived, they will not be in effect at the decision of the Secretary. Let me be clear. I am not opposed to thoughtful reform of our civil service system. However, the report goes too far. It will undo decades of some of the most important worker protections enacted by Congress and supported for decades by Republican and Democratic Presidents alike.

Notwithstanding these concerns, Mr. Speaker, I will support this important agreement. I expect it to pass by a wide margin with broad support from both Republicans and Democrats who stand squarely behind our troops and in favor of protecting our national security.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Smith), chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Speaker, the Democratic motion to recommit is among the most cynical and political motions I have seen in my 23 years in Congress. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, it is a charge designed and crafted to politicize disabled veterans and to mock the historic benefits increase contained in
this bill, $22 billion in the first 10 years and at least $57 billion over the next 20 years for disabled veterans. For example, a 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans over the next 10 years may see an increase of approximately $167,000 over the new system and new money. They do not have it now. Under this bill these deserving men and women will get it. The same goes for those whose wounds are combat related or rated 50% or above by the VA.

For the last 100 years, as we know, the unfairness of concurrent receipt has been with us. For most of those years, the Democrats had a hammer lock on the House and Senate and did nothing. In the early 90's the Democrats had it all. Bill Clinton was in the White House for 8 long years. Yet nothing was done on the Billikakis bill. Nothing was done to reform concurrent receipt. Even this year, it wasn't in the Democratic budget. We tried to make this a bipartisan effort—today's motion is pure politics.

I am sickened by this kind of posturing. I know the game you are playing. This is all about the next election. Our bill would give relief to all veterans. This additional bill will make a significant addition to the benefits received by our disabled veterans. I hope Members will vote for it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD).

Mr. MICHAUD. I thank the distinguished gentleman foryielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for former Members of Congress because I am a freshman this year, but had I been a Member of Congress in the past, I definitely would be fighting strongly for the repeal of concurrent receipt.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the motion to recommit to provide full concurrent receipt for disabled military veterans. For years, the lack of concurrent receipt, or as some have called it the disabled veterans tax, has taken a toll from the pockets of serving military retirees. It is an embarrassment that Congress has gone this long without taking care of that disabled veterans tax. I am glad that some veterans will get relief under this bill. But all veterans deserve relief. This is a matter of keeping sacred promises.

The so-called compromise today is leaving a lot of veterans behind, including 2,038 veterans in Maine who would have been beneficiaries if we enacted full concurrent receipt for all.

I urge my colleagues to vote for the motion to recommit to provide a full benefit to all veterans. If that fails, I definitely will support the final bill to give the best of what is left some of our serving veterans, including 1,219 in Maine who will now get concurrent receipt under this bill. That is a good step forward.

But if we do not give up and I will keep working until all veterans get full concurrent receipt and we eliminate the unfair disabled veterans tax on these veterans.

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

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

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in full support of H.R. 1588 the National Defense Authorization Act for 2004. I am supporting this legislation because our fighting men and women deserve to be properly funded. However, I have grave concerns in regards to how this legislation has been handled in this House. The Armed Services Committee, I stand with Ranking Member IKE SKELTON in expressing my dismay that Democratic members were not consulted on very important provisions of this significant legislation. This Authorization bill while monumental can truly be considered the work of this entire body if it was not inclusive of Democratic members. Even so, I add my appreciation to Chairman DUNCAN and Ranking Member SKELTON for their sincere commitment to our Armed Forces.

CONCURRENT RECEIPTS

Mr. Speaker, I rise in full support with my Democratic colleagues in asking for the immediate elimination of the disabled veterans tax. The 100% disabled veterans tax that is added on top of all the other monies our service members earn is unfair. The concurrent receipt authorization bill leaves two-thirds of our military retirees to continue having their compensation compromised by this tax. Disabled military retirees should not be prohibited from receiving the full amount of their retirement pay while still receiving the full amount of their disability compensation—these benefits are their entitlement; after all, we are forever indebted to them for their service. Our disabled veterans should be amongst our most cherished and recognized individuals in society, they deserve better than to be penalized for their sacrifices. The time is now to adopt the proposal on concurrent receipt and eliminate this tax that is an undue burden on our disabled veterans who have already sacrificed enough for their nation.

EXIT STRATEGY FOR IRAQ

Mr. Speaker, the authorization bill provides necessary funding for our brave fighting men and women. This bill must insist on receiving a report on the exit strategy from Iraq. It is pertinent that this Congress be informed how long our soldiers will have to face mortal danger and that we have a workable and reasonable exit strategy. It is also important that we have little information as to when our current conflict will end? Secretary Rumsfeld has an obligation to this body and indeed to our brave
troops to report on the administration’s exit strategy from Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that this Authorization bill while supporting the needs of our Armed Forces may not address the need for greater protection for the Chinook helicopter that is widely used by our Armed Forces. The tragic loss of life that occurred by the downing of Chinook helicopters in Iraq illustrates the need for the implementation of defense technology to provide greater protection for the Chinook helicopters. Indeed, the Chinook is a vital instrument used by our Armed Forces to transport troops and supplies to our fighting forces on the front lines. It is also one of our most vulnerable pieces of our military arsenal. The infrared technology aboard the Chinook makes it more susceptible to ground-to-air missile attack. I am disappointed that this Authorization bill may not address the need for modifications to the Chinook helicopter that can counteract its vulnerability. We must not allow our Armed Forces to lose more brave men and women because we did not address this glaring need, let’s move to insure the safety of all fighting equipment.

What worries me the most about this momentous legislation is the provision in support of this Authorization. I do so because we must support our Armed Forces, as well it is long overdue that our civil service and defense employees receive pay increases.

I am also concerned about the purchase compromise reached with Boeing in this legislation. Boeing and their supporting suppliers who are based in Texas are innovative, when called upon, they are capable of responding to national security and civil market needs. It is also important in the future that contracts with the Department of Defense rely on both the lease and purchase of this vital equipment.

Mr. Speaker, I hope in the future that such significant legislation as this will involve the debate and full consideration of this entire body.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time. Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD).

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. I profoundly appreciate the hard work that has gone into this legislation but, my friends, we know that it is 1,200 pages long, it spends $400 billion of the taxpayers’ money and no one in this body save the conference members have had more than 3 hours to read this.

It is a fine thing to stand up and say we support our troops, and we all do. But the fact is we should not be voting on this today because we have not read it. We should vote next week on this, after we have time to think about this seriously. If we truly care about our veterans, let us care enough to read the legislation, and if we truly care about our troops, let us care enough to read this legislation.

I will have other concerns because I do not have enough information to vote yea or nay, and I regret that profoundly.

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

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS).

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the distinguished gentleman from Missouri, who is a classmate, for his leadership on all of the things that I am about to tell him and Chairman HUNTER on this bill. We have worked for 2 years on the tanker provisions in this legislation. I am convinced that modernizing our tankers is absolutely crucial to national security. The gentleman from Missouri and I worked for many years to implement and upgrade the B-2 bombers which fly out of Whiteman, Missouri. We have found that in all of these deployments that tankers are absolutely crucial.

I must tell the House that the condition of our tankers today is not good. The KC-135s have significant corrosion. They were all built between 1957 and 1963 in the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations. I have been on the flight deck with the pilots who fly them. I have talked to General Handy, General Jumper and they are convinced that replacing these tankers is one of the most important things we can do to preserve our military capability. When we deploy, every time we deploy, we have to have tankers. We have to have EA-6Bs, those jammers. Both of them are very old, both of them need to be replaced and we need get on with it.

One of the things that I am concerned about is that we still have not addressed since the Bush administration took office the fact that we are short in procurement still to $40 billion. The argument in the tanker issue is lease versus buy. The only reason we had to do a lease is the Air Force did not have the money to buy these airplanes. That is why we have got to get the procurement account up. General Myers says somewhere between $100 and $110 billion. We are at $72 billion. We have got work to do.

I am very concerned about the provisions in this bill that deal with worker rights. We are going to continue to work on that. I hope that down the road we can exempt shipyards from those new restrictions.

Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry. The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The gentleman will state it. Mr. SKELTON. Who has the right to close? The SPEAKER pro tempore. The SPEAKER pro tempore. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. MARSHALL).

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) for their leadership in pulling together a good bill. Not all of the provisions of this bill are satisfactory to everyone in this Chamber and ultimately I think this bill will pass, but I want to give us an opportunity to improve the bill by increasing the tax cut that this bill contemplate for disabled American veterans.

I have heard a reference to this being cynical. I have heard a reference to the tragedy of events in which there were other opportunities to end the disabled veterans tax, but I am a new guy here and I think today we have an opportunity to do what is right. If it was right 20 years ago or 50 years ago or 10 years ago, it is right now. I am going to offer a motion to recommit. I want everybody to understand what that motion to recommit does.
The House conference report on H.R. 303, the bill to end the disabled veterans tax, is designed to end the disabled veterans tax. There are many on the other side of this aisle who have signed on as cosponsors of H.R. 303 to end the disabled veterans tax. We have an opportunity to do that right now with this motion to recommit. It is a rifle shot. It does only one thing, and that is do right by our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, for the reasons stated. I ask everybody to vote for this bill and to oppose the motion to recommit, Mr. Speaker, for the reasons stated.

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Department of Defense authorization conference report. But before I address the issues raised by this bill, I want to thank the staff for their hard work on this bill. I especially appreciate the work of the committee staff and Mr. Berry. I also want to extend a special thank you to Faye Virostek, who has worked in my office as a Brookings Fellow for almost a year. Faye is tremendously talented and dedicated. She has contributed greatly to my work on the Armed Services Committee and to my office, and I wish her the best as she prepares to return to her permanent executive branch job.

I did not sign the conference report because I object to some of the provisions of the Conference Committee from deliberations over several important issues. In some cases, we were able to work constructively to reach reasonable compromise, but in others, the majority was unwilling to work with us in an attempt to produce a consensus position. I do not believe that our nation’s interests or this institution are well-served by this process.

For example, the conference report mirrors the House report language to rewrite the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act, two critical environmental laws.

In addition, the resolution on concurrent receipt of disability and retirement benefits fails to resolve the unfairness and hardship faced by many veterans. I believe the debate needs to be continued on this very important issue, and I was disappointed that the majority chose to adopt a half-measure rather than solving the problem in its entirety.

I also am dismayed that efforts to clarify the Berry Amendment failed in this round of the conference process, but it is a serious blow to the textile industry in Massachusetts and across the country.

Having said that, I believe the conference report is on the whole a solid proposal. At a time when members of our nation’s military are being asked to make tremendous personal sacrifices, this bill represents a step in the right direction.

I recognize the importance of providing a truly bipartisan authorization package in order to maintain the world’s most capable military. To this end, the subcommittees on terrorism, unconventional threats and capabilities, where I serve as ranking member, authorized increased spending on DARPA, chemical and biological defense, and special operations. I applaud Subcommittees Chairman SAXON for his leadership and work on that, and I also want to thank Ranking Member SKELTON for all of his efforts.

While this bill generally represents a sound approach to most of the issues before the Committee, I am disappointed that its flaws could not be corrected. In the coming months, I hope that we will be able to move forward and address the shortcomings in this conference report.
Mr. Speaker, as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I am pleased to speak in support of the bill before the House today. The military pay increase and the enactment of this legislation will provide our Nation's military with the tools they need to continue their service, complying with the environmental protections. I urge Chairman Jerry Lewis and Ranking Member Jack Murtha of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, for their work to help this effort reach fruition.

This legislation takes another step toward providing concurrent receipt to our Nation's disabled military retirees, though the language falls short of our obligations. As a cosponsor of H.R. 303, I believe we must fulfill our promises by allowing these disabled military retirees to request total access to both their retirement pay and disability benefits. Next Tuesday, our Nation honors those Americans that have protected our Nation, and we must honor their service by providing them with the benefits they have earned.

Unfortunately, today's agreement contains language that may undermine important civil service safeguards for civilians within the Department of Defense, as well as existing environmental protections. I urge Chairman Jerry Lewis and Ranking Member Ike Skelton to schedule hearings on these topics in the coming months so that our committee may exercise appropriate oversight authority and ensure that the implementation of these new policies does not undermine decades of efforts by Congress to protect our environment and federal workforce.

Overall, this legislation represents an important investment in the defense of our Nation, and I urge my colleagues to support its passage.

Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ. Mr. Speaker, the Defense Authorization Conference should be commended for rejecting efforts to undermine the agreement signed by President Bush that provides important protections for how Naval Station Roosevelt Roads is to be closed. It was particularly critical because this is a very sad week in Puerto Rico, as Puerto Rico has lost three of our young men and one woman who were serving on active duty in Iraq. It would have been a cruel irony for the Defense authorities to remove fundamental BRAC protections for Puerto Rico at the same time the Puerto Ricans were paying the ultimate sacrifice by serving our country.

Last spring the U.S. Navy announced downsizing plans for Roosevelt Roads. The Navy followed its announcement with the planned departure from the Vieques training range—a result that was the fruit of innumerable debate and struggle. In subsequent testimony to Congress, the Navy professed high operational costs and personnel requirements stemming from the continued operation of Roosevelt Roads and implied the base should close.

Of course, downsizing and the implications of closure have taken their toll and it has been a sordid year for Roosevelt Roads, those who work or worked there and Ceiba, Puerto Rico—the community the base has called home for the past 60 years. The Navy's own pronouncements estimated the base brought $300 million annually to the local economy. The region around base, with 14 percent unemployment, can ill afford a drawn out redeployment, or leaving the base on inactive status, allowing the land to waste away without a clear plan for redevelopment and creating additional uncertainty among the community. While I appreciate that all of out of scope items in conference have been dropped, I fear that punitive efforts may surface yet again as base closure and redevelopment continues.

The recent proposals are stalling tactics void of substantive intent and driven by anger stemming from deep resentment held by those who strongly opposed closing the Vieques training range. Let the past become the past. Let's move forward with the best interest of the U.S. military and the American citizens in Puerto Rico in mind.

If enacted such tactics would have continued to cost the Navy money and drain personnel resources, while hindering meaningful economic opportunity for Puerto Rico. Under such a scenario, American citizens in Puerto Rico would remain without jobs while base re-development plans sat in limbo.

Puerto Ricans care deeply about their common citizenship and continue to serve valiantly in our military. What should soldiers think of such punitive, political squabbling about a base closure at home, while they fight overseas? As it was President Bush who authorized the Navy's departure from Vieques, he too has stated on many occasions that we all should avoid politicizing military affairs when our troops are abroad.

I am included for the RECORD a letter co-signed by fellow Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. Such support is much appreciated. Further, I want to thank Ranking Member Ike Skelton and his Senate counterpart Carl Levin for their strong commitment and leadership on this issue.

I find it troubling that the bipartisan deal that took place on Defense Appropriations might someday be undermined by such resentful politics, especially given the difficult challenges we now face, and the sacrifices we ask of our troops. I will continue to fight against these punitive efforts while at the same time I will pursue dialogue with those colleagues who may still consider punishing action against my constituents.

It certainly would be in the best interest of the Navy, the provider of the local community, and the people of Roosevelt Roads to set the stage for these new proposals aside, and continue working to redevelop the base and rejuvenate the local economy. We Members of Congress have more pressing matters to consume our time.

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, given our current military situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, I believe it is incumbent upon us to send an unequivocal message of support for our troops.
who are currently in the field. It is equally important that we provide veterans—those who have made sacrifices in order to protect the safety of our country, the benefits they have rightfully earned.

Not since the Korean War have we as a country been so reliant on the members of our reserve forces and National Guard as we do now. We are depending on them to preserve the peace in Iraq and protect our safety at home. We have uprooted them from their families, taken them away from their jobs and put them in the line of fire. Yet, it is not uncommon that after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, members of the Reserve forces return home without the basic benefits they so rightfully deserve. While this legislation is far from perfect, it takes an important step by ensuring that activated members of the Reserve forces and National Guard and their families receive health benefits.

Importantly, this legislation extends the increase in “combat pay” and a Family Separation Allowance for all of our troops who are currently serving in the military. Given the sacrifice these troops make in the name of protecting our country, it is only right to guarantee that they and their families have adequate financial resources in their time of need.

Additionally, this legislation addresses the unfair Disabled Veterans Tax. It allows certain disabled veterans to receive both their base retirement and disability benefits. However, it only allows concurrent receipt of these benefits for one-third of the approximately 700,000 disabled veterans. I believe this is simply inadequate and is the reason why I voted to recommit this bill. The veterans could have the chance to repeal the entire Disabled Veterans Tax and let all disabled veterans rightfully receive both their military benefits as well as their retirement benefits.

While I do not believe this bill is perfect and I am particularly concerned with certain provisions regarding civil service reform and the environment, I do believe that given our current military obligations, it is essential that we support our troops. By extending benefits for our troops and veterans, we are guaranteeing that those who have dedicated their lives to serving our country are not left behind during this critical time.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the Conference Report of H.R. 1588, the Defense Authorization Act. This bill contains anti-environmental provisions that roll back fundamental protections of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

H.R. 1588 exempts the military from protecting endangered species. Provisions in this Conference Report authorize the Secretary of Defense to adjust the status of some 300 threatened and endangered species living on military lands by prohibiting the designation of critical habitat as mandated under the ESA. Instead, military lands will be managed under Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans, prepared by the Secretary of Defense. Currently, such plans lack any definitions, no standards, and no limits.

Such sweeping changes in the management of species living on military lands are completely unnecessary. Sea otters and toads do not and will not prevent our military from being the best trained and prepared in the world. But if for some reason the toads rise up, the military already has, but never has used, a national security exemption as part of ESA. The military has shown so little previous concern with this issue that it was only in March of this year that the Department of Defense began developing guidance on how to assess and process exemptions requests inappropriate situations.

The “encroachment” of civilian communities on military managed lands is a serious problem as the separation between where people live and where the military trains decreases. As such, there has never been a more necessary measure for the public’s best interest. The public wants and needs a healthy and well-managed environment for the military to be held to complying with our nation’s fundamental environmental protection laws. The military should be listening to its neighbors and respecting their requests, and Congress should have listened to its constituents and prevented the weakening of the ESA and MMPA.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1588, to authorize military spending for fiscal year 2004. This bill authorizes the funding necessary to defend our country and promote our interests throughout the world. The bill makes significant enhancements to our combat capabilities, continues our efforts to transform the military to meet the terrorist threats of the 21st century, and provides a number of new benefits to American soldiers throughout the world.

Congress has a responsibility to work with the President to protect the national security of our nation. When our soldiers are sent in to war, it is the Congress’s responsibility to make sure that all resources necessary are provided to carry out their missions.

I stand behind our brave men and women who have performed admirably in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have made tremendous sacrifices on our behalf and have served longer deployments than expected. Much of the funds in this bill will go directly to support our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Under this bill our men and women in uniform will receive a 4.15 percent average increase in base pay. At the same time the bill reduces the average amount of housing expenses paid by service members from the current 7.5 percent to 3.5 percent, and eliminates out-of-pocket expenses completely by fiscal year 2005. The bill also extends special pay and bonuses for active duty personnel through the end of 2004. The bill also increases the allowance for service members with dependents is increased, from $100 to $259 per month. The special pay rate for those subject to hostile fire and imminent danger is increased from $150 to $225 per month. The legislation also extends TRICARE health coverage to National Guard members and reservists and their families if such servicemembers have been called to active duty. The bill also authorizes nearly $1 billion for military construction, family housing, medical facilities, and child development centers.

This legislation also continues the transformation of our military to meet new challenges of the global war on terror. The bill funds research and procurement of countermeasures to protect troops and the homeland from chemical, biological, and nuclear attack. It increases weapons and equipment procurement for Special Operations Forces. It funds programs to dismantle, secure, and eliminate weapons of mass destruction and facilities in Russia and the former Soviet republics.

There are several significant shortcomings in this legislation, however, that I would like to discuss.

This conference report contains an inad- equate proposal to address the Disabled Veterans Tax imposed on our military retirees. Under current law, military retirees are taxed one dollar of their retirement pay for every dollar they receive in veterans compensation. Denying service-disabled men and women the benefits they have earned breaks our promise to those who placed their lives on the line for America’s freedom. Any veteran with a service-connected disability, regardless of the length of his or her military service, can retire from a federal civilian job and receive both retired pay and disability compensation without penalty.

America’s troops are united as they serve in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the world. Our veterans were united—they fought for our country. They remain united today in their love for our nation. But the Disabled Veterans Tax compromise before the House today seeks to divide them. It leaves behind more than 390,000 disabled military retirees—more than two-thirds of those who would receive full compensation under H.R. 303. Those retirees with a Purple Heart or combat-related disability would be eligible this January. Others who have 50 percent or greater disability would have to wait for ten years to receive these benefits. Those with 50% disability still will not receive one penny of compensation for their disabilities.

Because this compromise is phased in over a ten-year period, many of our older veterans, particularly those from World War II and the Korean War, may not live long enough to receive the full benefits to which they are entitled. In my district in Maryland, there are 1,519 veterans who are now subject to the Disabled Veterans Tax. This bill leaves 1,000 of them behind.

More than 85 percent of the members of this House have cosponsored HR 303, yet the compromise before us falls far short. Many of my colleagues also signed the discharge petition that would compel the House to consider this bill. I urge my colleagues to support the motion to recommit. It would have stripped from the bill the inadequate compromise language that only helps two-thirds of America’s veterans, and replace it with full, immediate concurrent receipt. Our disabled military retirees deserve no less.

I am also disappointed that conferees chose to include in this bill a far-reaching plan to revamp the DOD civilian employee system.
Under this agreement, more than 700,000 civilian workers in the Defense Department will lose fundamental protections that have been in place since President Kennedy’s administration. These protections were put in place to safeguard against the patronage, political favoritism, and nepotism that were rampant before the advent of the civil service system. These DoD employees will lose many of their current due process rights. The conference report retains the right of employees to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board but only as an appellate body. As a result, employees would have far fewer rights to appeal personnel actions than other civilian employees have. They would lose guarantees on overtime pay, hazard pay, weekend pay, and holiday pay. Finally this provision empowers Secretary Rumsfeld and all future Secretaries of Defense to create an entirely new personnel system for DoD civilians. I am also very concerned that enactment of these provisions will set a dangerous precedent that will lead to erosion of protections in other federal department and agencies. In these times of uncertainty and turmoil, we are asking more of our civil servants than ever before in our history. To remove these important safeguards now is the wrong thing to do.

In sum, Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that we have failed to provide the full concurrent receipt that they deserve. It is unacceptable that we have eroded some of the civil service protections for Defense Department employees. However, I will support this legislation because it provides additional resources for our troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, and throughout the world as they prosecute the global war on terrorism. It will be given every available tool for its arsenal as it combats emerging threats to our soldiers and our homeland.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1588, the FY 2004 Department of Defense Authorization bill.

However, I believe that this bill is far from perfect. It does not fully support veterans’ disability issues, collective bargaining for civilian personnel, and protection for the environment. It is unfortunate that these issues suffered due to the end of the 108th Congress. I did support legislation to reform HAVA before considering any changes. Therefore, I did not believe that some of the suggested changes were necessary.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my disappointment in this conference report that I received. I must oppose it.

I support our troops and our veterans, and applaud the conference report’s improvement in pay for our troops, but there are far too many things wrong with this bill. For example, under H.R. 1588, environmental standards are weakened and worker rights are severely limited. Yet again, the Republicans have placed a higher priority on partisanship and special interests than doing what is right for our country and our civilization.

But, of all the many problems with this conference report, the most disappointing is the section on concurrent receipt that fails to end this horrendous policy for many of our disabled veterans. For months, the Republicans have refused to allow a vote which would end the disabled veterans tax for all of our veterans. But now in a half-hearted attempt to appear responsive to the overwhelming demands of Democrats and veterans groups to repeal this tax, the Republicans have thrown our veterans a bone—a partial repeal of the concurrent receipt policy.

It is estimated that, under the Republican plan, two-thirds of disabled veterans will not receive one penny of compensation for their disabilities. This is unacceptable. Our veterans have earned all of what they have earned. Our veterans have sacrificed in order to ensure our freedom and safety. Congress must now do its part. Congress can and must completely end the disabled veterans tax—immediately.

Mr. Ortiz. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman Duncan Hunter and Ranking Democrat Ike Skelton for their leadership on this important bill.

Our young men and women in uniform are performing magnificently right now in Iraq in a difficult and developing mission. They are also performing magnificently in Afghanistan, and elsewhere around the world where the global war on terror is in progress. Let us allow them to be as well-equipped as possible for their mission. Our troops with an aerial view of the battlefield can make the difference between victory and defeat. We can provide them with the right tools to do their job.

This conference report also calls on the Secretary of Defense to submit to the House Intelligence Committee a report on the preparation for and conduct of our military operations under Operation Iraqi Freedom. I am thankful that the F-22A Raptor received additional funding. The Raptor is the new front line jet fighter for our Air Force. This aircraft will give us complete air superiority. I am proud to say that we build this radar system in my district.

The Authorization also contains additional funding for the Shadow 200 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle. This vehicle which is again built in my district played a vital role in Iraq in providing our troops with an aerial view of the battlefield to support their troops on the ground. Because of the success of this vehicle the National Guard is now interested in the unit and has requested funding for it.

I am happy to say an amendment I inserted into the Defense Authorization has been accepted and will be a part of this authorization. My Amendment calls for employee surveys of leadership and management performance. This survey will help to promote efficiency and allow for the recognition of achievement and increase best practices in an agency. It is important that we allow employees to take ownership of where they work and to make them part of the team.

Again, I rise in support of this conference report.

Mr. Abercrombie. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report for the Fiscal Year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act. I would first like to recognize our Committee leadership, Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Skelton, for the bill they have crafted to address the immediate needs of our Armed Forces. Our Committee has a long tradition of working across party lines to ensure the readiness and well-being of our Armed Forces, and I am pleased to have participated in yet another cooperative effort with my

As we move forward, I will be working to do more to ensure our military retirees eventually get a full concurrent receipt.

I will keep a very close eye on the plans and activities of the Department of Defense as they proceed with their plans for civil service reform. I want to ensure that our civil service workers and our military have a strong workforce our national security demands. Mr. Ruppersberger. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1588 the Defense Authorization Conference Report. While this conference report has some deficiencies it also has a number of positive points that I support.

Initiallly when this Defense Authorization was drafted compromises were reached that would allow the DoD to have flexibility and at the same time providing labor protections. Unfortunately, the conference report language has been reworded and allows DoD to wipe away these protections. It is unfortunate that civilian defense employees are not receiving the same protections. I would hope that we can work to ensure workers rights at the Pentagon. These men and women serve our country and are also fighting to protect our freedoms.

While this conference report has begun to address the issue of concurrent receipts for veterans it does not fully solve the problem. We need to make sure all veterans receive these protections. It takes a strong united front to solve the problem, but it does not fully solve the problem.

This conference report also calls on the Secretary of Defense to submit to the House Intelligence Committee a report on the preparation for and conduct of our military operations under Operation Iraqi Freedom. I am thankful that the F-22A Raptor received additional funding. The Raptor is the new front line jet fighter for our Air Force. This aircraft will give us complete air superiority. I am proud to say that we build this radar system in my district.

The Authorization also contains additional funding for the Shadow 200 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle. This vehicle which is again built in my district played a vital role in Iraq in providing our troops with an aerial view of the battlefield to support their troops on the ground. Because of the success of this vehicle the National Guard is now interested in the unit and has requested funding for it.

I am happy to say an amendment I inserted into the Defense Authorization has been accepted and will be a part of this authorization. My Amendment calls for employee surveys of leadership and management performance. This survey will help to promote efficiency and allow for the recognition of achievement and increase best practices in an agency. It is important that we allow employees to take ownership of where they work and to make them part of the team.

Again, I rise in support of this conference report.

Mr. Abercrombie. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report for the Fiscal Year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act. I would first like to recognize our Committee leadership, Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Skelton, for the bill they have crafted to address the immediate needs of our Armed Forces. Our Committee has a long tradition of working across party lines to ensure the readiness and well-being of our Armed Forces, and I am pleased to have participated in yet another cooperative effort with my
Armed Services colleagues. Unfortunately, this bipartisan spirit did not extend to the more controversial aspects of the Defense Authorization Act, especially the reworking of the civil service system and yet another compromise on the Disabled Veterans Tax. On the balance, however, this bill establishes good policy for our troops when they need it the most.

H.R. 1588 offers the pay and benefit measures that our Armed Forces deserve. We put together another healthy across-the-board pay raise—15 percent, as well as bill-up raises of up to 6.25 percent for mid-grade and senior noncommissioned officers and select warrant officers. We have also extended special pay provisions for the men and women deployed around the world. Hostile fire and imminent danger pay will be raised from $150 per month to $225 per month through December 1, 2004, while family separation allowance (FSAA) will increase from $100 to $250 per month.

In an effort to address the issue of military readiness, H.R. 1588 also includes TRICARE health benefits for deploying Reservists. We have been undermining our own system by relying on Reservists to be ready to go when called but failing to provide them the required medical, dental, and mental health care. This is not only unfair but also detrimental to readiness. Through this new authorization, the Department of Defense can provide immediate medical and dental screening and care for selected Reservists who are assigned to a unit alerted or notified of mobilization. Non-mobilized Reservists currently without health insurance will also be able to enroll in TRICARE on a cost-share basis. With the burden on our Reserves at an all-time high, providing basic health care is the least we can do for those called to duty.

One of the worst aspects of this legislation is the wholesale dismantling of our Department of Defense civilian workforce. Under the conference report before us, some 700,000 federal employees will be stripped of their rights and protections in the current civil service system and placed at the mercy of political appointees in DoD. The Defense Authorization Act, as written, provides no guidelines for a new civilian personnel system; rather, it gives the major military services carte blanche to act as they see fit. The conference report before us, some 700,000 federal employees will be stripped of their rights and protections in the current civil service system and placed at the mercy of political appointees in DoD. The Defense Authorization Act, as written, provides no guidelines for a new civilian personnel system; rather, it gives the major military services carte blanche to act as they see fit.

Likewise, I am dissatisfied with the partial rollback of the Disabled Veterans Tax. For years I have cosponsored and supported legislation efforts to allow disabled veterans to receive their full retirement annuity in conjunction with VA disability pay, and year after year, we are forced to keep a recovery dollar that they receive in disability pay. A veteran must not be punished for being disabled.

I cosponsored H.R. 303, the concurrent receipt bill. And I signed the petition that would have brought this bill to the House floor despite Republican opposition. Our veterans are simply waiting for what they are owed—their disability pay and their full pensions.

Our veterans are dying at a rate of 1,000 a day. The Republican plan will not aid the veterans that need help now.

Under the Republican plan only one-third of the disabled veterans will get the help that they need. This is unacceptable and our veterans are not going to do the job, however it is full of provisions that not only waste tax dollars, but also threaten Americans’ health and safety.

I am pleased that the Defense Authorization bill starts to reduce the tax on disabled Veterans which is long overdue. I am disappointed that the bill would only partially end the tax—leaving out two-thirds of military retirees affected by the tax and forcing those covered to wait 10 years for full benefits.

I am also extremely disappointed that the conferences chose to eliminate the 1993 ban on low-yield nuclear weapons. The House bill allowed research but maintained the ban on development activities that could lead to the production of a destabilizing and unnecessary new low-yield nuclear weapon. However, Congress accepted the Senate compromise that also allowed research but eliminated the ban. Fortunately, Congressional approval is required before these dangerous weapons can be produced, and I hope that this never occurs. Producing a new generation of low-yield nuclear weapons increases the likelihood they will be used in conflict, breaking a taboo that has been in place since World War II. Developing new types of nuclear weapons sends the wrong message to other nations. America must lead by example if the threat of nuclear weapons is going to be eliminated.

The bill is missed opportunity to focus on real priorities. The anti-environmental provisions in this bill are especially frustrating. Instead of addressing real threats to readiness,
the administration and the Republicans in Congress are taking on an easier target, dolphins. Using defense as cover, they are proposing changes to environmental laws that have nothing to do with defense readiness.

As the largest owner of infrastructure in the world, the Department of Defense is the single biggest polluter of America’s water, and congests our roadways, and this is threatening the armed forces, not as first-use weapons. At issue is whether Congress needs to resort to repealing the Spratt-Furse prohibition on nuclear weapons testing when rational alternatives have not been fully explored.

I have already seen too many Americans succumb to then- unforeseen consequences of weapons testing. Advances in containment technology are certainly possible, however, if we are to address the moral and ethical concerns that the remaining weapons testing will work. I will continue to oppose the nuclear weapons related provisions in this year’s defense authorization bill.

No one is arguing about the need for new technologies with which our nation can combat the threats posed by those held by terrorists. At issue is whether Congress needs to resort to repealing the Spratt-Furse prohibition on nuclear weapons testing, which is currently written into law.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I come from a family of downwinders. My father, as well as other loved ones, developed terminal cancer after he was exposed to radiation from Cold War nuclear weapons tests. I come from a family of downwinders. My father, as well as other loved ones, developed terminal cancer after he was exposed to radiation from Cold War nuclear weapons tests. I do not believe that we should even consider a resumption of nuclear weapons testing when rational alternatives have not been fully explored.

I have already seen too many Americans succumb to then- unforeseen consequences of weapons testing. Advances in containment technology are certainly possible, however, if we are to address the moral and ethical concerns that the remaining weapons testing will work. I will continue to oppose the nuclear weapons related provisions in this year’s defense authorization bill.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today in opposition to the very limited provisions in H.R. 1588, the Department of Defense Authorization Act. The Department of Defense has not been granted for military necessity.

The defense authorization bill is also wrong on weapons testing and I will do everything in my power to ensure any benefits. That means every disabled military retiree and veteran with a disability greater than 50 percent will be entitled to concurrent receipt.

It also creates a 13-member bi-partisan commission appointed by Congressional leaders and the White House. Under the commission, for the first time since 1946, there will be a top-to-bottom review of the disarmament system. The commission’s goal is to review the disarmament system to ensure that the appropriate benefits are provided to our retirees and veterans.

From World War II to Vietnam, from the Persian Gulf War to the War on Terror, we provided our active military with the tools they need to do their jobs, and our retirees and veterans with the proper benefits for their years of service. The concurrent receipt agreement follows that tradition and honors those who have served our country.

Mr. MATHESON, Mr. Speaker, I have always been a strong supporter of the military operation in Department of Energy labs. We face against terrorists. However, I continue to oppose the nuclear weapons related provisions in this year’s defense authorization bill.

No one is arguing about the need for new technologies with which our nation can combat the threats posed by those held by terrorists. At issue is whether Congress needs to resort to repealing the Spratt-Furse prohibition on nuclear weapons testing, which is currently written into law.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I come from a family of downwinders. My father, as well as other loved ones, developed terminal cancer after he was exposed to radiation from Cold War nuclear weapons tests. I do not believe that we should even consider a resumption of nuclear weapons testing when rational alternatives have not been fully explored.

I have already seen too many Americans succumb to then- unforeseen consequences of weapons testing. Advances in containment technology are certainly possible, however, if we are to address the moral and ethical concerns that the remaining weapons testing will work. I will continue to oppose the nuclear weapons related provisions in this year’s defense authorization bill.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today in opposition to the very limited provisions in H.R. 1588, the Department of Defense Authorization Act. The Department of Defense has not been granted for military necessity.

The defense authorization bill is also wrong on weapons testing and I will do everything in my power to ensure any benefits. That means every disabled military retiree and veteran with a disability greater than 50 percent will be entitled to concurrent receipt.

It also creates a 13-member bi-partisan commission appointed by Congressional leaders and the White House. Under the commission, for the first time since 1946, there will be a top-to-bottom review of the disarmament system. The commission’s goal is to review the disarmament system to ensure that the appropriate benefits are provided to our retirees and veterans.

From World War II to Vietnam, from the Persian Gulf War to the War on Terror, we provided our active military with the tools they need to do their jobs, and our retirees and veterans with the proper benefits for their years of service. The concurrent receipt agreement follows that tradition and honors those who have served our country.

Mr. MATHESON, Mr. Speaker, I have always been a strong supporter of the military operation in Department of Energy labs. We face against terrorists. However, I continue to oppose the nuclear weapons related provisions in this year’s defense authorization bill.

No one is arguing about the need for new technologies with which our nation can combat the threats posed by those held by terrorists. At issue is whether Congress needs to resort to repealing the Spratt-Furse prohibition on nuclear weapons testing, which is currently written into law.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I come from a family of downwinders. My father, as well as other loved ones, developed terminal cancer after he was exposed to radiation from Cold War nuclear weapons tests. I do not believe that we should even consider a resumption of nuclear weapons testing when rational alternatives have not been fully explored.

I have already seen too many Americans succumb to then- unforeseen consequences of weapons testing. Advances in containment technology are certainly possible, however, if we are to address the moral and ethical concerns that the remaining weapons testing will work. I will continue to oppose the nuclear weapons related provisions in this year’s defense authorization bill.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today in opposition to the very limited provisions in H.R. 1588, the Department of Defense Authorization Act. The Department of Defense has not been granted for military necessity.

The defense authorization bill is also wrong on weapons testing and I will do everything in my power to ensure any benefits. That means every disabled military retiree and veteran with a disability greater than 50 percent will be entitled to concurrent receipt.

It also creates a 13-member bi-partisan commission appointed by Congressional leaders and the White House. Under the commission, for the first time since 1946, there will be a top-to-bottom review of the disarmament system. The commission’s goal is to review the disarmament system to ensure that the appropriate benefits are provided to our retirees and veterans.

From World War II to Vietnam, from the Persian Gulf War to the War on Terror, we provided our active military with the tools they need to do their jobs, and our retirees and veterans with the proper benefits for their years of service. The concurrent receipt agreement follows that tradition and honors those who have served our country.

Mr. MATHESON, Mr. Speaker, I have always been a strong supporter of the military operation in Department of Energy labs. We face against terrorists. However, I continue to oppose the nuclear weapons related provisions in this year’s defense authorization bill.

No one is arguing about the need for new technologies with which our nation can combat the threats posed by those held by terrorists. At issue is whether Congress needs to resort to repealing the Spratt-Furse prohibition on nuclear weapons testing, which is currently written into law.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I come from a family of downwinders. My father, as well as other loved ones, developed terminal cancer after he was exposed to radiation from Cold War nuclear weapons tests. I do not believe that we should even consider a resumption of nuclear weapons testing when rational alternatives have not been fully explored.

I have already seen too many Americans succumb to then- unforeseen consequences of weapons testing. Advances in containment technology are certainly possible, however, if we are to address the moral and ethical concerns that the remaining weapons testing will work. I will continue to oppose the nuclear weapons related provisions in this year’s defense authorization bill.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today in opposition to the very limited provisions in H.R. 1588, the Department of Defense Authorization Act. The Department of Defense has not been granted for military necessity.

The defense authorization bill is also wrong on weapons testing and I will do everything in my power to ensure any benefits. That means every disabled military retiree and veteran with a disability greater than 50 percent will be entitled to concurrent receipt.

It also creates a 13-member bi-partisan commission appointed by Congressional leaders and the White House. Under the commission, for the first time since 1946, there will be a top-to-bottom review of the disarmament system. The commission’s goal is to review the disarmament system to ensure that the appropriate benefits are provided to our retirees and veterans.

From World War II to Vietnam, from the Persian Gulf War to the War on Terror, we provided our active military with the tools they need to do their jobs, and our retirees and veterans with the proper benefits for their years of service. The concurrent receipt agreement follows that tradition and honors those who have served our country.

Mr. MATHESON, Mr. Speaker, I have always been a strong supporter of the military operation in Department of Energy labs. We face against terrorists. However, I continue to oppose the nuclear weapons related provisions in this year’s defense authorization bill.

No one is arguing about the need for new technologies with which our nation can combat the threats posed by those held by terrorists. At issue is whether Congress needs to resort to repealing the Spratt-Furse prohibition on nuclear weapons testing, which is currently written into law.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I come from a family of downwinders. My father, as well as other loved ones, developed terminal cancer after he was exposed to radiation from Cold War nuclear weapons tests. I do not believe that we should even consider a resumption of nuclear weapons testing when rational alternatives have not been fully explored.
Finally, today’s Conference Report recognizes the future needs of our military. H.R. 1588 enables the Secretary of Defense to develop a more comprehensive and attractive array of educational programs in science, mathematics and engineering. Educational programs in technical fields will help to train the next generation of engineers, and technical entrepreneurs, all of whom may contribute to the future technological superiority of our military forces.

Congress and the American people support our brave military for their commitment and their sacrifice. In Iraq shows the importance of preparation and equipment for our military as they work to defend freedom and liberty across the globe. In addition to these vital education provisions, the Conference Report to be passed today will provide the necessary resources and training for our troops at home and abroad.

Mr. McGovern. Mr. Speaker, I rise in re- luctant opposition to this Conference Report. While I have continuing problems with the process of how this bill was negotiated, especially the limited time for the full Democratic- appointed conferees, and how no time has been allowed for Members of this body to review the final version of the bill on which we are voting this morning, it is not for reasons of process that I oppose this bill. I oppose this bill because it does not do right by our disabled veterans; it does not do right by the hard-working, faithful, and patriotic Department of Defense civilian employees. $30 million is authorized to be used as general revenue by LEAs that are impacted by the presence of military installations.

Every Member recognizes the importance of preparation and equipment for our military personnel and those in training, as well as the educational needs of our children.

服务-连队的残疾人员不被允许支持所有军事退役人员的 VA 福利补偿。在这种情况下，他们正在支付他们的退休金。我们需要停止支付他们的补偿。在 essence, they are acting as outside contractors to our veterans. The majority of our military forces. The recent war in Iraq shows the importance of preparation and equipment for our military as they work to defend freedom and liberty across the globe. In addition to these vital education provisions, the Conference Report to be passed today will provide the necessary resources and training for our troops at home and abroad.

Mr. McGovern. Mr. Speaker, I rise in reluctant opposition to this Conference Report. While I have continuing problems with the process of how this bill was negotiated, especially the limited time for the full Democratic-appointed conferees, and how no time has been allowed for Members of this body to review the final version of the bill on which we are voting this morning, it is not for reasons of process that I oppose this bill. I oppose this bill because it does not do right by our disabled veterans; it does not do right by the hard-working, faithful, and patriotic Department of Defense civilian employees. $30 million is authorized to be used as general revenue by LEAs that are impacted by the presence of military installations.

Every Member recognizes the importance of preparation and equipment for our military personnel and those in training, as well as the educational needs of our children.

Finally, today’s Conference Report recognizes the future needs of our military. H.R. 1588 enables the Secretary of Defense to develop a more comprehensive and attractive array of educational programs in science, mathematics and engineering. Educational programs in technical fields will help to train the next generation of engineers, and technical entrepreneurs, all of whom may contribute to the future technological superiority of our military forces.

Congress and the American people support our brave military for their commitment and their sacrifice. In Iraq shows the importance of preparation and equipment for our military as they work to defend freedom and liberty across the globe. In addition to these vital education provisions, the Conference Report to be passed today will provide the necessary resources and training for our troops at home and abroad.

Mr. McGovern. Mr. Speaker, I rise in reluctant opposition to this Conference Report. While I have continuing problems with the process of how this bill was negotiated, especially the limited time for the full Democratic-appointed conferees, and how no time has been allowed for Members of this body to review the final version of the bill on which we are voting this morning, it is not for reasons of process that I oppose this bill. I oppose this bill because it does not do right by our disabled veterans; it does not do right by the hard-working, faithful, and patriotic Department of Defense civilian employees. $30 million is authorized to be used as general revenue by LEAs that are impacted by the presence of military installations.

Every Member recognizes the importance of preparation and equipment for our military personnel and those in training, as well as the educational needs of our children.

Finally, today’s Conference Report recognizes the future needs of our military. H.R. 1588 enables the Secretary of Defense to develop a more comprehensive and attractive array of educational programs in science, mathematics and engineering. Educational programs in technical fields will help to train the next generation of engineers, and technical entrepreneurs, all of whom may contribute to the future technological superiority of our military forces.

Congress and the American people support our brave military for their commitment and their sacrifice. In Iraq shows the importance of preparation and equipment for our military as they work to defend freedom and liberty across the globe. In addition to these vital education provisions, the Conference Report to be passed today will provide the necessary resources and training for our troops at home and abroad.

Mr. McGovern. Mr. Speaker, I rise in reluctant opposition to this Conference Report. While I have continuing problems with the process of how this bill was negotiated, especially the limited time for the full Democratic-appointed conferees, and how no time has been allowed for Members of this body to review the final version of the bill on which we are voting this morning, it is not for reasons of process that I oppose this bill. I oppose this bill because it does not do right by our disabled veterans; it does not do right by the hard-working, faithful, and patriotic Department of Defense civilian employees. $30 million is authorized to be used as general revenue by LEAs that are impacted by the presence of military installations.

Every Member recognizes the importance of preparation and equipment for our military personnel and those in training, as well as the educational needs of our children.
the Administration of President George H.W. Bush. This new program will allow the United States to pursue a new generation of nuclear weapons of a type most likely to be used in battle, which I fear may lead to a new nuclear arms race on a global scale.

I also have other concerns regarding this bill, such as the weakening of the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which I do not have time to go into this morning.

I regret that I must vote in opposition to this very important bill, but I simply cannot stomach striking our disabled veterans, the Defense Department workers, and the very security of our nation and the world from nuclear attack.

Mr. BERREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member rises in strong support for the conference report on H.R. 1588, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004. This Member would like to offer particular thanks to the distinguished gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SIMPSON). All time for debate has expired.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

There was no objection.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MR. MARSHALL

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Member is very appreciative for the inclusion of a gap in the levee that would only accentuate the flooding risks and flood volume that would affect the Nebraska National Guard Camp segment must coincide with the construction of the eastern Sarpy Levee project. Completion of the Camp Frontage Levee Segment is a central element of the Clear Creek portion of the Western Sarpy Levee project. Completion of the Guard camp segment must coincide with the rest of the levee construction project.

Previously, the Clear Creek Project was authorized at $15.6 million in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (WRDA 2000) to provide protection to the City of Lincoln, Nebraska, and U.S. Route 69 (Amtrak Line), telecommunications lines and other public facilities. In the FY2003 omnibus appropriations bill, Congress included $500,000 for construction start-up costs.

The Nebraska National Guard Camp at Ashland, Nebraska, provides training for Nebraska and other states’ Army guard units to maintain mission readiness. The Ashland Guard Camp levee is essential to the development of a more cost-effective frontage levee to replace a previous ring-levee approach.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this Member again expresses his appreciation and urges his colleagues to vote in support of the conference report for H.R. 1588.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. (Mr. SIMPSON.) All time for debate has expired.

There was no objection.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MR. MARSHALL

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman opposed to the conference report?

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, because the conference report does far too little to end the disabled veterans tax, I oppose the conference report in its present form.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will record the motion to recommit.

The Clerk reads as follows:

Mr. MARSHALL moves to recommit the conference report on the bill H.R. 1588 to the committee of conference with instructions that the committee of conference may amend the bill, which amendment is to be reported back to the House and the Senate along with the conference report.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The motion is not debatable.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the motion to recommit to the committee of conference will be followed by 5-minute votes on the adoption of the conference report; the motion to instruct the President pro tempore to instruct the Senate to instruct the committee of conference with instructions that the committee of conference may amend the bill, which amendment is to be reported back to the House and the Senate along with the conference report.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the previous question ordered on the motion to recommit?

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The motion is not debatable.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the motion to recommit to the committee of conference will be followed by 5-minute votes on the adoption of the conference report; the motion to instruct the President pro tempore to instruct the Senate to instruct the committee of conference with instructions that the committee of conference may amend the bill, which amendment is to be reported back to the House and the Senate along with the conference report.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 188, nays 217, not voting 30, as follows: [Roll No. 668]
November 7, 2003

Bachus
Allen
Alexander
Simpson

Members changed their vote from ‘yea’ to ‘nay.’

Mr. VITTER and Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland changed their vote from ‘yea’ to ‘nay.’

Mr. WHITFIELD and Mr. TANCREDO changed their vote from ‘nay’ to ‘yea.

The motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The Speaker pro tempore. The Speaker pro tempore. The Speaker pro tempore. The Speaker pro tempore. The Speaker pro tempore. The Speaker pro tempore.