

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 27, 2010

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5136) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Chair, I rise in strong opposition to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2011. This legislation authorizes \$725.9 billion for defense programs this year, including \$159.3 billion specifically for the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the so-called "war on terror." Once again, the House of Representatives easily approves billions of dollars for war, while a bill that would provide genuine assistance to our constituents gets watered down by the demagoguery of fiscal responsibility.

Our national security is not preserved or furthered through the military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Our presence in the region continues to foment resentment toward us and undermines the human rights of the Iraqi and Afghani people. To date, more than 4,000 U.S. servicemembers have lost their lives in Iraq, and more than 31,000 have been wounded. As the number of troops in Afghanistan surpasses the number in Iraq, over one thousand U.S. troops have been killed thus far. With the continuation of the wars, we are creating a new generation of Americans that will experience the trauma of war, like Vietnam veterans before them.

According to the United Nations, air strikes continue to be the leading cause of civilian deaths in Afghanistan, despite the Administration's claims that avoiding civilian casualties is a cornerstone of the Afghan strategy. Innocent Afghans are killed, detained or threatened in frequent night raids conducted by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces, while Afghan President Hamid Karzai buys million-dollar villas in Dubai. This bill also authorizes \$4.9 billion for ammunition and weapons systems, including for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles—or drones—that conduct indiscriminate attacks against suspected militants in Pakistan. According to a study conducted by the New America Foundation, three civilians die for every suspected militant killed by a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) drone in Pakistan.

I am also concerned about a number of the amendments adopted in the bill that I believe have no place in a bill that is intended to address our national security. Language addressing sex-offenders and language that has considerable implications on our foreign policy was included as part of an en bloc amendment that addressed a significant gap in the health care services provided to our veterans pre and post-deployment. An amendment was also adopted that would allow the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to conduct defense-related pilot programs with the Department of Defense (DOD). I have fought for years to keep NASA separate from DOD in order to preserve NASA's mission integrity and therefore, longevity.

While I oppose the underlying bill, I supported an amendment that would lead to the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) military policy. For the past 17 years, DADT has forced our service men and women to hide who they are as they selflessly sacrificed their lives for our country. The amendment would repeal DADT following the receipt of recommendations from a Pentagon working group tasked with formulating the implementation of the repeal and certification from the President and Secretary of Defense that the Department of Defense is prepared to implement its repeal.

Since the implementation of this discriminatory and misguided policy in 1993, almost 14,000 service members have been fired because of their sexual orientation. The United States is well behind many of our allies in allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military. Policies, like DADT, that create an atmosphere of fear and mistrust among colleagues serving side-by-side have no place in the military. I applaud the repeal of DADT and believe it is a significant step toward ensuring equality in our military and securing rights for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community.

I urge my colleagues to reflect on the policies and fiscal implications included in this legislation. As the country struggles to pull itself out of one of the worst economic recessions in history, we must commit to our priorities here at home—protecting our environment, keeping people in their homes, and getting people back to work.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 27, 2010

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5136) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. STARK. Mr. Chair, I rise to oppose out of control war and defense spending. This bill (H.R. 5136) would authorize a record \$726 billion for defense. Congress refuses to find money to maintain COBRA premium assistance for jobless workers, but somehow we can afford yet another increase to our already bloated defense budget.

We should recognize that this legislation would fix a long-standing injustice by creating a path for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." I was proud to vote for the Murphy Amendment and I look forward to the day when LGBT Americans enjoy equal rights in all facets of society, including marriage. Although I strongly support the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," I cannot vote for this legislation.

The waste in this bill is shameful. It includes \$361.6 million more than the Pentagon wants for a missile defense program that doesn't work, and \$485 million in funding for another engine for a fighter jet that already has a working engine. I offered an amendment that

would have cut the extra funding for missile defense, but it was not allowed to come to the floor for a vote. An amendment to strike money for a duplicative engine that the Pentagon doesn't want or need was also defeated.

Congress needs to get our priorities in order. We should be working to create jobs and assisting those impacted by the recession, not continue runaway defense spending. I urge all of my colleagues to oppose this wasteful bill.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RON KLEIN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 28, 2010

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Madam Speaker, on Thursday, May 27, I was unavoidably detained.

Had I voted, I would have voted "yes" on rollcall No. 312.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 27, 2010

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5136) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of H.R. 5136, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2011, though I have concerns about certain provisions that have been included in the bill.

While I strongly support many aspects of the bill, I am concerned about the inclusion of language to overturn the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Earlier this year, the Secretary of Defense ordered a study of the issue of repealing "Don't Ask Don't Tell." He said that while he believes it should be repealed, he first wanted to gather input from the troops before moving forward with repeal. I agree with the approach of Secretary Gates. I also agree with our military's service chiefs, including Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz, who said we should complete the Secretary's review before passing legislation to repeal "Don't Ask Don't Tell." I believe we should follow the lead of our military leaders. That means following the process we set up earlier this year to gather input from our troops and study the effect of repeal on our military forces. That is the best way to make sure our troops have their views heard, and that the right decision is made for the men and women in our armed forces.

While I voted against the amendment to end the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, I will be voting in favor of final passage of the 2011 NDAA. I believe that it is vitally important that Congress enact its yearly Defense Department authorization bill in a timely matter. This legislation helps to set military policy and any delay

in its enactment will have a negative effect on the department's ability to effectively and efficiently make decisions to execute that policy.

This bill also includes an important pay increase for our soldiers, authorizes funding for badly needed equipment for our Guard and Reserve and includes my amendment to continue the Joint Family Support Assistance Program. Additionally, the bill authorizes important military construction projects in North Dakota including nearly \$19 million to construct a new Air Traffic Control Complex at Minot Air Force Base, \$11.2 million to renovate and expand the Readiness Center at Camp Grafton and \$500,000 to begin planning and design of a Central Deployment Center at the Grand Forks Air Force Base. These programs must be authorized so that the DoD can put these important initiatives in place. My vote in favor of this bill is a vote to move the important process of authorizing the activities of the Defense Department forward in a timely manner and a vote in support of our soldiers.

APPLAUDING THE MACOUPIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE'S INCLUSION AS ONE OF THE "150 GREAT PLACES IN ILLINOIS"

HON. PHIL HARE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 28, 2010

Mr. HARE. Madam Speaker, I rise today with great pride to applaud the Macoupin County Courthouse and its inclusion as one of the "150 Great Places In Illinois" as determined by the American Institute of Architects as part of its 150th anniversary celebration. This remarkable courthouse in the City of Carlinville has long had great historical significance. It was built to replace the courthouse where a persuasive attorney named Abraham Lincoln once practiced law, and since its completion it has stood as a central part of the county and local community.

Completed in 1870, the courthouse was designed by Elijah E. Myers, who later designed numerous state capitols. This extraordinary building resembles the Corinthian order with its impressive portico on the north side and south elevation. The large dome, classical detailing and use of native limestone all add to the building's splendor. At the time of its completion, this courthouse was among the largest county courthouses in the United States, rivaled in size only by the one in New York City. Within Illinois it became an impressive symbol of grandeur, as it even outsized the Illinois Statehouse in the Springfield Capital.

Along with its aesthetic appeal, the building also garnered praise for being technologically advanced. The Macoupin County Courthouse was designed and constructed to be nearly fireproof—a characteristic not at all common among structures of the day. Stone, brick and metal were used almost exclusively, with wood used only sparingly. The painted sheet metal was magnificently detailed, and some of the major doors were constructed from cast iron. The ornate design, materials and construction resulted in a cost of over \$1.3 million dollars once completed, roughly \$19 million by today's standards.

The Macoupin County Courthouse still serves as the seat of the county government

143 years later, which demonstrates the enduring impact and quality of the structure. With its inclusion as one of the "150 Great Places In Illinois," the Macoupin County Courthouse joins other significant landmarks such as the State Capital and the homes designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in Oak Park. I applaud the American Institute of Architects for including the Macoupin County Courthouse and recognize that it will continue to be a proud symbol of Illinois achievement and magnificence for generations to come. I thank the Speaker for allowing me to share this moment of joy stemming from the 17th Congressional District of Illinois.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. TODD RUSSELL PLATTS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 27, 2010

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5136) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. PLATTS. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of this important amendment and I thank my friend from New Jersey, BILL PASCRELL, for allowing me to work with him on this issue. The Department of Defense and the RAND Corporation have recently estimated that 20 percent of our military personnel who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan have suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

Because symptoms of TBI often go unnoticed, at least initially, it is difficult to know exactly how many troops are living with this disability. If not diagnosed early on, TBIs can lead to memory loss, severe headache disorders, and alcohol and drug abuse.

Neurocognitive assessment has been proven to be an effective tool in detecting and measuring the severity of TBI. This is why the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization required the Department of Defense to screen ALL military personnel for TBI both before and after deployment. Post-deployment screenings are to be compared with pre-deployment (or baseline) assessments to determine whether or not the servicemember is suffering from a TBI.

Unfortunately, too many of our men and women returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are still not being screened for TBI. Servicemembers that have been screened post-deployment are currently given a self-assessment checklist, in which the results are not even comparable to their pre-deployment neurocognitive screenings. Not to mention that because the checklist is self-administered, the results are typically inaccurate since these troops either do not realize or do not want to admit that they are living with a TBI.

I am pleased that this year's Defense Authorization includes language requiring the Department of Defense to implement a comprehensive screening and assessment policy by the end of 2011. However, until this policy is fully implemented, thousands of our men and women in uniform are returning from com-

bat without the necessary screenings to ensure that they receive proper treatment.

This amendment, which I am proud to have introduced with Congressmen PASCRELL, ANDREWS, COLE, ORTIZ, COFFMAN and JOE WILSON, will ensure that until the Department of Defense has put in place a comprehensive screening policy, all of our military personnel will receive neurocognitive assessments both before and after deployment. The amendment requires that the same neurocognitive tool used for pre-deployment assessment also be used for post-deployment evaluation. Using the same test allows physicians to compare the baseline screening with the post-deployment results to determine whether a TBI does in fact exist. The current system of using different tools for pre and post deployment screenings is like comparing apples to oranges. It is essential that our men and women who put themselves in harm's way to protect us every day receive immediate and appropriate care.

Though TBIs are difficult to detect because no one symptom exists, it is imperative that the Department of Defense take every possible measure to diagnose and treat our troops affected by TBI. This is why I strongly support this amendment and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same.

MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE

HON. ALLYSON Y. SCHWARTZ

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 28, 2010

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Madam Speaker, as Memorial Day approaches, it is important we each take a moment to pay tribute to the generations of Americans who have given their lives so that we may enjoy the rights and freedoms we hold so dear. It is important to remember and honor those who have served us and have given the ultimate sacrifice.

As the daughter of a veteran of the Korean War, I had the privilege of knowing firsthand the pride commanded through military service by those who served and the families who supported them. As a member of Congress, it has been my honor to work to provide those who have served our Nation with benefits reflective of their service.

This Memorial Day, each of us can express our gratitude with a simple yet powerful act of tribute. Americans are asked to pause at 3 p.m. for a National Moment of Remembrance. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, stop for just one minute. Consider all the rights and liberties that are guaranteed to us as Americans, but withheld from so many others around the world. Consider the members of the armed forces who served, fought and died so that our great Nation can be strong and we can live with liberty and security.

TRIBUTE TO RETIRING EDUCATORS

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 28, 2010

Mr. WAXMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Sandra Resnick, Marta