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U.S. Congressman John B. Larson
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HOUSE PASSES 2003 DEFENSE BILL CONTAINING BILLIONS FOR CONNECTICUT

WASHINGTON, D.C.- In an early morning vote, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 4546, the Fiscal Year 2003 Defense Authorization bill, which provides full funding for national defense programs important to the state's defense industry and workforce.

Larson stated: ♦The defense bill passed today by the House fully funds defense programs that are critical to maintaining America's superiority in military flight technology including the F-22 Raptor and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. The bill also includes funding for 39 Black Hawk helicopters, 12 more aircraft than the president requested. The fact that the Armed Services Committee showed such strong support for these vital national defense programs is a testament to the tremendous effort put forward by Connecticut's defense manufacturing and technology workforce. ♦

The legislation includes a 4.1% military pay raise, with larger pay increases for mid-grade and senior noncommissioned officers and mid-grade officers, and eliminates current law provisions that cause military retirees who are eligible for veteran's disability compensation to have their retirement pay reduced, an issue commonly referred to as "concurrent receipt." The bill establishes a payment transition program to compensate retirees who are 60% or greater disabled until fiscal year 2007, when all such retirees will receive their full retirement and disability compensation.

The bill also added additional funds for several programs important to Connecticut, including: \$34 million for F-15 E-Kit engine upgrades and \$62 million for F-16 engine upgrades; \$5 million for modernized demolition initiators; \$45.8 million for 15 additional M88A2 tank recovery vehicles; \$5 million for advanced fuel cell technology; \$4 million for research into arthropod-borne infectious disease control; \$1.5 million for Defense Manufacturing Supply

Chain Management; \$9 million for the real time precision targeting radar; \$19.7 million for AN/SPQ-9B DDG-51 Radar program; \$2 million for a Fuel Catalyst Research and Evaluation; and \$7 million for submarine payloads and sensor programs.

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