

ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE SHOWS STRONG SUPPORT FOR CONNECTICUT DEFENSE INDUSTRY IN 2003 SPENDING BILL

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) announced today that the House Armed Services Committee showed strong support for national defense programs critical to Connecticut during the committee's "mark up" of H.R. 4546, the Fiscal Year 2003 Defense Authorization bill late last evening.

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.

Larson stated: "The Defense Authorization bill acted upon by the Armed Services Committee last night shows solid support for national defense programs that are also vital to Connecticut's defense industry and workforce. I am delighted that the F-22 Raptor and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) both received full funding, and through the hard work of the Connecticut Congressional Delegation, the Black Hawk Helicopter program was significantly increased above the president's request, with 12 additional aircraft being ordered for a total procurement level of 39."

The legislation fully funds the President's request of \$3.4 billion for F-35 Joint Strike Fighter research and development; \$4.1 billion for 23 F-22 aircraft, \$530 million for advanced procurement of 27 F-22 aircraft in FY04, and \$627 million for additional F-22 research and development; \$3.7 billion for procurement of twelve C-17 transport planes; \$279 million for procurement of one E-8C JSTAR aircraft; and \$1.6 billion for procurement of one new Virginia class submarine, and \$415 million in advance procurement for another submarine in FY04.

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; approximately \$5 million for advanced fuel cell technology; approximately \$4 million for research into arthropod-borne infectious disease control; approximately \$9 million for the real time precision targeting radar; and approximately \$7 million for submarine payloads and sensor programs.

