

LARSON INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO REIMBURSE MILITARY FAMILIES AND TROOPS FOR BODY ARMOR PURCHASES

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Lack of Adequate Gear in Iraq Spurred Some to Buy It On Their Own

HARTFORD- On October 13, Pene Palifka of East Hartford attended a public forum on Iraq in East Hartford Town Hall with U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01). She told the Congressman that her son, Bill Palifka of the 248th Engineer Co. currently serving in Iraq had not been given the most effective body armor that American troops were supposed to have. Worried for her son's safety, she said she used her own money to buy the body armor for him.

Before Congress adjourned on November 22, Congressman Larson introduced H.R. 3615, a bill to establish a program to reimburse members of the Armed Forces for the cost of protective body armor they purchased for themselves, or was purchased for them on their behalf. The bill would cover those troops deployed in connection with operations in Afghanistan and Iraq if the service member was not issued the adequate protective body armor before their deployment.

"The men and women of our military are putting their lives on the line everyday overseas and deserve the best, most up-to-date protective gear," said Larson. "It is outrageous for our troops to go without adequate body armor and unconscionable that hardworking people like Pene Palifka need to spend \$1,100 of their own money to buy protective equipment for their family members."

Despite the fact that Congress had appropriated funding in the April supplemental spending bill for ceramic "Interceptor" body armor that gives greater protection to servicemen and women, as of late October, an estimated 44,000 troops still did not have the adequate armor. The Department of Defense has indicated that all troops will have the new body armor by the end of December. The bill would provide reimbursements for protective equipment purchased between September 11, 2001 and December 31, 2003. The legislation requires the Secretary of Defense to establish such a reimbursement program within 60 days of the passage of the legislation.

Larson is also looking into the possibility of addressing this issue administratively within the Department of Defense.

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Congressman Larson Serves on the House Armed Services Committee