

HOUSE PASSES DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

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Measure Authorizes Billions for Programs Important to CT; Contains Larson-Sponsored Measure to Reimburse Troops, Families for Body Armor Purchases

WASHINGTON, D.C.-The House of Representatives today passed legislation that authorizes \$422.2 billion in spending for national defense programs, including several important to Connecticut's defense industry and workforce. The defense authorization bill also includes language authored by U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-1) to allow the Secretary of Defense to reimburse American troops serving overseas for body armor they purchased - or was purchased on their behalf by their families or loved ones - because they did not yet have the most up-to-date protective equipment. Larson successfully included the language as an amendment during the Armed Services Committee mark-up of the bill. The House passed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 by a vote of 391-34.

"This is a good bill for Connecticut, our troops and the families of service members," said Larson. "The state's defense industry is a pivotal player in several programs this legislation authorizes funding for, including the F/A-22 Raptor, the Joint Strike Fighter and the Black Hawk helicopter, all of which are fully funded. Thanks to a constituent from East Hartford named Pene Palifka, it contains the provision to reimburse our troops or their families for body armor they had to purchase with their own money because the government did not meet its obligation to properly equip them. The bill also ensures that military spouses can receive their full survivor's benefits, which are slashed by a third under current law when they reach age 62."

The Military's Widows Tax, reduced survivor's benefits for military spouses by a third - from 55% to 35% of their spouses salary - when they reached age 62.

The bill includes:

\$4.2 billion for the F/A-22 Raptor - 24 aircraft

\$4.6 billion for the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) for Research and Development

\$3.2 billion for C-17 - for both R & D and 14 aircraft

Added \$156 million and 8 aircraft to the Black Hawk program over the President's budget request

\$10 billion for family housing

\$705 million for Up-Armor Humvees

\$332 for Ballistic Armor for other Humvees and Trucks

\$421 million for additional 1½ Interceptor 1½ body armor sets

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