

Rep. Bilirakis Presses Congress to Pass Clean Troop Supplemental Bill

WASHINGTON (22 May) — On Thursday, U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.) cosponsored legislation that would provide for a clean emergency troop supplemental appropriations bill. He called on lawmakers to pass the Clean Global War on Terror Supplemental Appropriations Act (H.R. 6026) before adjourning for the Memorial Day District Work Period.

Last week, the House failed to pass the emergency supplemental appropriations measure after the Majority voted to strip from the measure nearly \$162.5 billion in funding for troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. While Bilirakis voted in favor of the troop funding portion of the three-part supplemental measure, he opposed the other two amendments that largely contained multi-billion dollars in domestic spending, a \$54 billion tax increase aimed at small businesses, and restrictions on military commanders in Iraq.

"It is clear to surmise from the process by which the Majority handled this funding measure that Washington is indeed broken by partisanship and a lack of leadership," said Bilirakis. "We are in effect bankrupting the military's ability to pay the troops at the expense of legislation that is packed full of domestic spending, higher taxes and micromanagement of our commanders on the battlefield."

During testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee on May 20, 2008, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates explained that further delay in passing the supplemental appropriations request would severely hamper operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and disrupt the military's overall operations.

"After June 15th, we will run out of funds in this account to pay Soldiers - including those currently serving in Afghanistan and Iraq." Secretary Gates later added, "Delaying the supplemental makes it difficult to manage the Department in a way that is fiscally sound and prudent."

"One of the most fundamental duties that we are charged with in Congress is to provide funding for our troops," said Bilirakis. "Above all other things we are doing this week, passing a clean emergency supplemental appropriations bill should be our top priority. I urge the Majority to immediately consider H.R. 6026 to do just that."