

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today the House of Representatives passed a final supplemental appropriations bill for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that provides for President Obama’s plan to end combat operations in Iraq, refocusing the fight against terrorism, and better preparing the nation for pandemic flu. This legislation also provides funds to assist the Government of Mexico in the war against drugs. Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), Vice Chair of the House Democratic Caucus and senior member of the Ways and Means Committee, voted for the bill.

“This past November 2008, the American people made a decisive choice to change the course of American policy. We wanted change. We asked for change. And that’s what we got,” Rep. Becerra said. “Today we vote to set in motion further change in the conduct of our foreign and national security policy.

“It is the right choice to responsibly redeploy our troops from Iraq, to secure and stabilize Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to aggressively pursue every avenue of diplomacy to secure international support and cooperation for new policies that will lead to lasting security and prosperity for every corner of the world.”

“Some might question aspects of the President’s strategy. Some might think we can move faster, farther, or smarter. That could be right. But in its totality, this proposal is far-reaching yet pragmatic about the facts we face on the ground in today’s global hot spots.”

The bill directs the Secretary of Defense to submit a report to Congress every 90 days that assesses the progress made by the Iraqi government towards assuming full governing responsibility and how the drawdown of military forces is complying with the president’s timeline. This measure is in recognition and support of President Obama’s plan to withdraw all U.S. combat brigades from Iraq by August 31, 2010 and all U.S. military forces by December 31, 2011.

The legislation also makes clear that the United States does not intend to stay in Iraq or Afghanistan by prohibiting the construction of any permanent base for the stationing of U.S. forces in either country.

The supplemental requires the administration to submit a comprehensive plan for closing the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, recognizing President Obama's executive order to do so by January 22, 2010. This report must include where detainees still held at the facility will be sent and how any security threat they pose will be managed.

The bill provides over \$734 million to compensate over 170,000 service members who have had their enlistments involuntarily extended since September 11, 2001 with \$500 per month for every month they were held under stop-loss orders.

This legislation also reflects the Obama Administration's commitment to support Mexico in its fight against drug-trafficking and organized crime. It provides \$470 million to address growing violence along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"I recently visited Mexico and had the opportunity to learn more about the efforts that our neighbors to the south are implementing to fight drug violence. But their efforts can only be successful if we share the responsibility and provide them with the support they need to fight the war against drugs," Rep. Becerra said.

The total cost of the legislation is \$96.7 billion, including \$84.5 billion for Department of Defense operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, \$10 billion for diplomatic, foreign aid and stabilization activities, \$2 billion for pandemic flu preparedness, and \$393.6 million for other security needs.

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