

Army Announces Support for New Commissary

(Washington, DC) - U.S. Representatives Mike Doyle (PA-14), Tim Murphy (PA-18), and Jason Altmire (PA-4) announced that a meeting with Department of Defense officials this afternoon resulted in several significant steps forward in their efforts to build a new military commissary in Allegheny County. Today's meeting produced two significant breakthroughs.

The Army gave the local Congressional delegation a commitment to keep the Charles E. Kelly commissary open until 2011. Prior to today's meeting, the DoD had only agreed to keep this facility open until 2009.

The Army also informed the delegation that on November 27, it would recommend that the Commissary Commission authorize a new commissary in Allegheny County in the near future. The Army anticipates that the Commissary Commission would approve that recommendation, contingent upon the availability of adequate funding for the new facility.

"Today, we finally got the Army to give us a commitment to keep the commissary at the Charles E. Kelly base open until we can get a new facility built," Congressman Doyle said after the meeting. "This is a substantial improvement over the DoD's previous commitment to keep the commissary open through 2009."

"The Army's recommendation of a new commissary is great news for the region's military personnel, veterans, and their families," said Congressman Tim Murphy. "There are more than 160,000 military, retirees, reservists and their families in the region from Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia who are eligible for commissary services. Without a local commissary, military families would have to drive more than 400 miles roundtrip to the next closest commissary."

"I am extremely pleased with the results of today's meeting," Congressman Altmire said. "The DoD's commitment to keep the Charles E. Kelly commissary open until 2011 maintains a vital benefit that had been promised to our region's 160,000 eligible military personnel, retirees and their families."

The Army estimates that the new commissary will cost \$8.2 million. The House and Senate have already appropriated \$4 million for this new facility, and the delegation is confident that they can secure the additional funding needed next year.

In order to expedite the construction of the new commissary facility, which will be located on county land adjacent to the Pittsburgh International Airport, the Army has expressed its support for a "build to lease" approach in which Allegheny County would build the facility and then lease it back to the Department of Defense.

"I spoke to [Allegheny County County Executive] Dan Onorato this afternoon, and he was receptive to the concept of build to lease if that was the fastest way to build a new commissary," Congressman Doyle added. "Dan Onorato's been a steadfast supporter of efforts to keep a commissary in Allegheny Country since this battle began."

"I want to thank all the members of the Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia Congressional delegations, in both the House and Senate, who have been steadfast in their support for keeping a commissary open in southwestern Pennsylvania.," Congressman Doyle said. "The entire delegation has really worked as a team to make sure that our military personnel, retirees, and their families have access to the services they've been promised."

"Getting the Army to support us shows what can happen when everybody works together, from the Congressional delegations of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio, to Governor Rendell to Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato to local groups," Congressman Murphy said. "We are all a step closer to bringing a new commissary to Southwestern Pennsylvania and the continuation of a benefit that our military personnel and veterans have long deserved."

"I want to thank my colleagues in the House and Senate as well as County Executive Dan Onorato for working together to ensure the commissary's future in southwest Pennsylvania," Congressman Altmire added. "This effort required broad support and cooperation and I look forward to continuing to work together on the building of a new commissary."