

## Altmire: Budget Provides Tax Cuts for Working Families, Supports Veterans and Firefighters

(Washington, DC) &mdash; U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) today voted for the FY 2009 budget resolution, which cuts taxes for 20 million working families, provides the Veterans Administration with the funding it needs to meet rising demand, and rejects the president's attempts to severely cut grant funding for Pennsylvania's volunteer firefighters.

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"This fiscally-responsible budget provides tax relief for working families and honors America's commitment to care for our veterans," Altmire said. "Given the sacrifices America's veterans have made for our country, we have a moral obligation to ensure the VA has the funding it needs to provide first rate health care and services."

Congressman Altmire testified before the House Budget Committee in February to push for a \$4.9 billion increase in funding for the Veterans Administration (VA). This is a dramatic improvement over the president's budget, which provided only a 0.6 percent increase after inflation and proposed doubling the cost of prescriptions for veterans. With the funding increase Congress provided, the VA will be able to meet rising health care costs, care for 120,000 veterans entering the VA health system this year, address a 500,000 case backlog in veterans' disability claims, and finance much-needed improvements to VA clinics.

"America's veterans have a great champion in Congressman Jason Altmire," said Congressman John Spratt (SC-5), Chairman of the House Budget Committee. "Congressman Altmire's compelling testimony before the House Budget Committee highlighted the need to increase funding for the Veterans Administration so it can keep pace with rising demands. Congressman Altmire deserves credit for helping to ensure the budget that passed the House today is one that will continue strengthening health care and services for America's heroes."

Congressman Altmire also fought to protect funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program in the FY 2009 budget resolution. After President Bush proposed reducing the program's funding by 60 percent, Congressman Altmire sent a letter to the House Budget Committee demanding that these cuts be rejected. Had these cuts been accepted, Pennsylvania would have lost over \$39 million in funding, meaning roughly 434 fewer grants would be distributed statewide. Congressman Altmire also held a grant workshop in Gibsonia, PA last weekend to help western Pennsylvania firefighters apply for funding from this program.

"The Assistance to Firefighters Grant program is a vital resource for local volunteer fire departments who are struggling to raise the funds needed to update their equipment and facilities," Altmire said. "Our success in protecting this grant funding will help western Pennsylvanians' first responders obtain the tools they need to keep our families and communities safe."

