

House Clears Two More Altmire Bills for President's Signature

(Washington, DC) - Today, the U.S. House of Representatives approved two measures authored by Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-4) that will ensure the proper treatment of traumatic brain injuries (TBI) sustained by veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and will help military families handle issues that arise from a soldier's deployment. Both measures were included in the conference report on the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2008 (H.R. 1585). After the expected passage of the bill by the Senate later this week, it will head to the president's desk for signature.

The first measure, the Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Act (H.R. 1944), was introduced by Congressman Altmire in April. It requires the Veterans Administration to operate a comprehensive program of long-term care for TBI rehabilitation and to create and maintain a TBI veteran health registry. It passed the House on May 23, 2007. The second measure, a provision introduced by Congressman Altmire and Congressman Tom Udall (NM-3) and passed as an amendment to the Defense Authorization bill in May, will allow military families to use Family and Medical Leave time to manage issues, such as child care and financial planning, that arise as the result of the deployment of a spouse, parent, or child.

"Today, Congress passed historic legislation that fulfills our promise to military service members and veterans," said Congressman Altmire. "I am pleased that my two initiatives - to treat TBI among our returning veterans and to help our military families deal with issues that arise from deployment - were included. Millions of our veterans and their families will benefit from these achievements."

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer added, "Congressman Altmire has consistently fought for the needs of our nation's veterans this year. As a Freshman Member, it is a remarkable accomplishment to contribute two important provisions to the Defense Authorization bill. His efforts will have a direct and positive effect on the lives of our soldiers, veterans, and their families."

The National Defense Authorization Conference Report (H.R. 1585):

- Provides a 3.5 percent pay raise for military service members;
- Blocks the Bush Administration's proposed increases in TRICARE and pharmacy user fees;
- Adopts provisions of the Wounded Warrior Act to establish new requirements providing the people, training and oversight mechanisms needed to restore confidence in the quality of care and services received by wounded warriors and their families;
- Makes critical investments to prevent the occurrence of another Walter Reed-type scandal;
- Fully funds Army and Marine Corps equipment and increases funding for National Guard equipment;
- Elevates the rank of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to recognize the Guard's contributions to our nation's security; and,

- Combats fraud by contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan by tightening controls and requiring the reporting of waste, fraud and abuse.