



# COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

DAVID R. OBEY (WI-07), CHAIRMAN

## FACT SHEET

June 11, 2009

### 2009 SUPPLEMENTAL CONFERENCE: CARING FOR OUR TROOPS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Today, there are about 2.3 million men and women serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, active and reserve. Those servicemembers and their families have been asked to bear the brunt of the war. Since 2001, nearly 5,000 of them have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan and over 33,000 have been wounded.

The 2009 Supplemental Appropriations Conference Agreement recognizes the sacrifices of our troops, and the hardships military families face, by continuing to invest in improving military healthcare and family services.

#### Improving Military Healthcare



To help improve military healthcare, the Conference Agreement provides:

- Over \$1 billion for the Defense Health Program to supply medical and dental services to U.S. forces as they support Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, and their family members, including:
  - \$75 million for research into Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and psychological health issues including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Since 2001, there have been 42,600 diagnosed cases of PTSD and over 58,000 servicemembers treated for TBI. The funding will continue the Defense Department's counseling, suicide prevention, tele-health and risk reduction efforts for servicemembers and their families.
  - \$51 million for orthopedic and other trauma research, treatment and rehabilitation. Nearly two-thirds of injuries sustained in combat involve muscles and bones. Amputations following battlefield injury now occur at twice the rate as in past wars. Understanding how to treat and speed recovery from orthopedic injuries should be one of the top priorities for the military health system.
  - \$20 million to purchase equipment for rehabilitation facilities. The equipment will enable continued state-of-the-art care for soldiers with various types of injuries to recover to their full potential and return to a more normal way of life.
- \$488 million for hospital construction to replace hospitals that are decades old and do not meet current standards for medical care. With the funds in this bill, Congress will have provided an additional investment of \$2.7 billion in military hospitals since last year.
- \$488 million for wounded warrior complexes to help soldiers wounded in combat recover and remain on active duty or transition to civilian life and support families through this process. The funds will allow for the construction of seven new complexes, bringing the total around the country to 16.
- \$263 million to accelerate and enhance the construction of new hospitals at Bethesda and Ft. Belvoir to replace Walter Reed.

## Caring for Military Families

The families of U.S. servicemembers have become the unseen victims of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with those left behind struggling when their loved ones deploy and all too often when they finally come home. Children are among those who struggle most, as they must live with uncertainty and concern for their parents on a daily basis.

Recognizing the challenges military families face, the Conference Agreement provides:

- Transferability of GI Bill education benefits to children of members of the armed forces who die while on active duty.
- Over \$708 million, an increase of \$94 million above the request, for family advocacy programs, which provide families with access to child psychologists, child care, financial counseling and other support.

There is a growing need for military families to have access to professional counseling and services to help alleviate mental stresses. This funding is intended to help the Department of Defense continue to provide programs, products and services to help families cope with the disruption and stress common for military families.

- \$276 million for the construction of twenty-five new child development centers, which will provide care for an additional 5,000 kids.

Access to child care is a top concern for military families. These funds build on work by the Department of Defense over the last few years to expand child development centers to accommodate an additional 13,000 children. In total, Congress has provided the funding to construct or expand over 90 child development centers since 2008.

- \$238 million for the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, which will provide information, services, referral, and proactive outreach programs to members of the Reserve and their families for the challenges of mobilization and their return to civilian life.

As the Secretary of Defense noted last year, “in this time of war, our Guard families deserve our support and thanks as well. They are the power behind the power – husbands and wives, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters of our troops. In an effort to better support families of the Guard and Reserve, Defense has established a Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program... This program is designed to care for our troops and families in the critical time following their demobilization and reintegration into the civilian work place.”

**“We clearly understand that those also serve who stand and wait. Families are as much warriors in the war... as is anyone in uniform.”**

*- Maj. General Michael H. Taylor (ARNG, Ret.)*