



COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

DAVE OBEY (D-WI), CHAIRMAN

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Obey Statement: 2009 Supplemental Appropriations for Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Pandemic Flu

WASHINGTON – Today, Dave Obey (D-WI), Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, issued the following statement on the 2009 Supplemental Appropriations bill to be considered by the committee on Thursday.

“The supplemental request the committee will consider on Thursday is fairly close to the Administration’s request. The bill totals \$94.2 billion, \$9.3 billion above the White House request.”

“For the Department of Defense the bill contains \$78.4 billion which is \$4.7 billion above the White House. For Military construction the bill contains \$3.2 billion, \$900 million above the request, largely for the construction of hospitals. For the flu pandemic we have \$2 billion, \$500 million above the request.”

“The military money is largely for Operations and Maintenance and Military Personnel. As far as the other costs, we have added \$2.2 billion for C-17s, which will also allow for the decommissioning of a number of C-5s. We have added \$904 million for C-130s, essentially moving forward President Obama’s recommended purchase for 2010. The bill does not address the tanker issue.”

“Other items of interest, we increased funding for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles by \$2.2 billion to protect our troops. There is \$734 million to provide payments to troops that were hit with additional stop-loss orders retroactive to 2001. For F-22s we have provided enough money for 4 which is consistent with the Administration’s request.”

“For Afghanistan and Pakistan we have provided funding somewhat above the President’s request. The package is consistent with the President’s efforts to wind down the number of troops in Iraq and to pay for the President’s actions in Afghanistan to build up training for the military and the police. In Afghanistan we have provided \$3.6 billion for the Afghan Security Forces Fund, consistent with the Administration’s request.

“We have added \$80 million for State Department operations in Afghanistan to try to accelerate the civilian presence in that country. We have provided the \$400 million counterinsurgency fund for Pakistan that the Administration requested to train and equip Pakistani personnel but we provided it through the State Department with a pass-through to the Defense Department who will conduct the actual hands on operations.”

“For economic assistance for Pakistan we are \$500 million above the President, moving \$500 million of his request for 2010 to the earlier year.”

“As for the rest of the Middle East, we are providing more for State Department Operations in Iraq to facilitate the transition to civilian operations there. We are accelerating the delivery of \$555 million of the \$2.8 billion 2010 request for Israel, \$360 million for Egypt, and we are providing \$250 million for Jordan. The assistance for Gaza and the West Bank is \$665 million, as requested by the Administration.”

“In Mexico we are providing \$400 million above the President for surveillance planes, helicopters, and other efforts in the war against drugs.”

“With respect to Afghanistan and Pakistan, I am extremely dubious that the Administration will be able to accomplish what it wants to accomplish. The problem is not the Administration’s policy or its goals. The problem is that I doubt that we have the tools there that we need to implement virtually any policy in that region.”

“When I came here in 1969 I was opposed to the Vietnam war. But President Nixon pointed out that he had inherited it and deserved some time to try and make his policy work, so I decided to keep my mouth shut for a year. At the end of the year, Nixon had not moved the policy and so I began to oppose the war. I am following that same approach here. In essence we are giving the Administration everything that they want and then some to maximize their chance of succeeding, but the bill requires at the end of the year an honest, tough minded evaluation of the chances of success of the policy and of the performance by the Afghanistan and Pakistan governments.”

“Because the stability and security of the region is tied more to the capacity and conduct of the Afghan and Pakistani governments and to the resolve of both societies than it is to the policies of the United States, the President shall submit a report to Congress, not later than the date of submission of the fiscal year 2011 budget request, assessing whether the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan are, or are not, demonstrating the necessary commitment, capability, conduct and unity of purpose to warrant the continuation of the President’s policy announced on March 27, 2009. This report must include five concrete standards of performance:”

1. “The level of political consensus and unity of purpose to confront the political and security challenges facing the region;
2. The level of government corruption and actions taken to eliminate it;
3. The performance of security forces with respect to counterinsurgency operations;
4. The performance of intelligence agencies in cooperating fully with the U.S. and not undermining the security of our troops and our objectives in the region; and
5. The ability of the government to control the territory within their borders.”

“Now let’s turn to pandemic flu. The President has asked for \$1.5 billion. We are providing that funding but we are also providing an additional \$350 million for state and local aid. If the flu hits, it doesn’t just hit in Washington and it doesn’t just hit in state capitols, it hits in every neighborhood in the country. We have to be ready at the community level. There have been 11,000 public health layoffs at state and local public health departments in the last few years. That hurts our readiness status.”

“In addition we are providing \$200 million to strengthen worldwide response to the problem by supporting global efforts to track and contain the spread of the pandemic. This funding will support efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organizations to increase surveillance of outbreaks and to purchase anti-virals and antibiotics to help stop the spread of disease.”

“I would simply note that we have been trying to build our capacity to deal with this problem since 2005. In that year President Bush asked the Congress to appropriate a total of \$7.1 billion. The Congress responded by providing funding for a third of that request. In the following year they provided a second tranche, but they have not provided as much funding as President Bush requested or as prudence would have called for.”

“We tried to ask for \$420 million in the economic recovery package and we were laughed at. Some people asked what on earth does pandemic flu have to do with the economy. After seeing the Mexican economy virtually shut down last week I don’t think thoughtful people will be asking that question anymore.”

“Whatever we do, we still will not be fully prepared to deal with new manifestations of flu around the world.”

“In dealing with the H1N1 virus now, the soonest that a safe vaccine can be available to the public is in the fall. And because the public health goal will be to provide coverage for all of the population, we may have to spend significantly more than we are recommending here. But \$2 billion is the best estimate we have now as to what can reasonably be put to use and we should provide it.”

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