

June 7, 2007 House Appropriations Committee Increases Funding for Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security

For Immediate Release

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Washington D.C. - Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, announced that the House Appropriations Committee has approved the Homeland Security, Energy-Water, Military Construction-Veterans Affairs and the Interior-Environment Appropriations Bills for fiscal year 2008.

On Tuesday, the Committee passed a \$36.3 billion Homeland Security Appropriations Bill that provides nearly \$2.1 billion over the President's budget request to address critical security needs. This increase will give states an additional \$700 million for grants used to plan, equip and train local first responders and law enforcement as well as an additional \$500 million to address the communication, equipment and staffing problems facing local fire departments. The bill provides significant investments into border and immigration security, including funding for a record 17,819 border patrol agents.

On Wednesday, the Committee passed a \$31.6 billion Energy and Water Appropriations Bill that invests significant resources in renewable energy programs and the Army Corps of Engineers. The bill includes \$200 million for solar energy research and development, \$250 million for biofuels like coal based ethanol and \$235 million to improve vehicle fuel efficiency.

Also on Wednesday, the Committee passed a \$64.7 billion Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Bill that provides the largest increase in funding for veterans health care in the VA's 77-year history. The Committee added \$4 billion over the President's request to fulfill our obligation to our veterans and their families.

"This Congress has made veterans initiatives a priority," said Murtha. "This increase in VA funding will provide improved medical care, a faster claims processing period and much needed facility improvements."

Today, the Committee passed a \$27.6 billion Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill that provides \$2.5 billion for the National Park System, restores funding for water and sewer infrastructure grants and increases funding for historical preservation programs like Save America's Treasures. The Committee also approved additional funds for Brownfields projects, which are used throughout our region to redevelop abandoned industrial sites.