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For Immediate Release

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Washington D.C. - Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, announced today that the House of Representatives has passed a \$151.5 billion fiscal year 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill that includes funding for two local employment retraining programs and a hospital geriatric care program.

The appropriations bill includes \$750,000 for the United Mine Workers of America Career Centers, located in Southwestern Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The mining industry is expected to need 50,000 new miners in the next ten years, and the Career Centers will create training programs for new miners. The Career Centers also retrain those miners who have lost their jobs with the skills necessary to meet the demands of the current labor market.

"More than half of the country's electricity is generated from coal," noted Murtha. "With electricity demands continuing to grow, it is essential that we train the next generation of America's coal miners to meet current demands and to replace those who will be retiring. We must also provide retraining programs for those miners who have lost their jobs so that they are able to obtain new jobs within their community."

Also included in the appropriations bill is \$500,000 for the Veterans Leadership Program/Veteran Community Initiatives, Inc. (VLP/VCI), located in Johnstown. There are over 4,000 National Guard and Reservists in Southwestern Pennsylvania that have or will return from service in Iraq and Afghanistan to rural communities with minimal access to V.A. centers and urban rehabilitation and retraining resources.

The VLP/VCI is launching a pilot program to provide these veterans and their families with hands-on job search assistance, job retraining, resume preparation, job fairs, workshops, employer outreach, formal/informal readjustment counseling sessions, rehabilitation and daily living assistance initiatives.

"The Veterans Leadership Program has helped thousands of our veterans return to community life," said Murtha. "This program will continue that success and ensure that they have the career assistance and counseling they need."

The appropriations bill also includes \$350,000 for a comprehensive, community-based geriatric care program at Excelsa Health Frick Hospital, in Westmoreland County. This funding will be used to develop a \$3.5 million Alzheimer's Personal Care Unit, Geriatric-Psychiatry Unit and an Intensive Out-Patient Program to offer comprehensive support to an aging local population.

The Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill also makes key national investments into:

* National Institutes of Health (NIH): \$750 million above the fiscal year 2007 amount, allowing NIH to support an additional 545 new and competing research grants to prevent, detect, diagnose and treat disease and disability.

* Pell Grants: Increases the maximum Pell award by \$390 to \$4,700, benefiting over 5.5 million low-and-middle income students.

* Center's for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): \$6.5 billion, \$475.2 million above the President's request to support critical public health activities to include combating chronic diseases and providing more funding for childhood immunization.

* Social Security Administration (SSA): \$401 million increase over fiscal year 2007 to help reduce the Social Security claims backlog by improving processing time and keeping more Social Security offices open.