



Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen

House Committee on Appropriations

FY 2018 Defense Appropriations Bill - Full Committee Markup
June 29, 2017
Opening Statement As Prepared

Good morning. Welcome to our second full committee markup of the FY 2018 cycle. We meet today to mark up the fiscal year 2018 Defense and Legislative Branch Appropriations Bills.

We continue to keep Congressman Scalise, the Capitol Police, and all those injured or affected in our thoughts and prayers – particularly as we consider the Legislative Branch bill today.

I looked forward to a productive, efficient markup this morning – the next step in the Appropriations process. We continue to move towards our goal of completing all of the fiscal year 2018 Appropriations bills on time and in a responsible way.

This week alone, we have already marked up three bills in Subcommittee – plus the two bills before the Full Committee today, and later this afternoon, two more bills in Subcommittee. We have a lot to get done today, so let's get to it!

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Thank you both for your remarks and for your excellent work drafting this very important bill and the time and effort of your great staff!

After years of reductions to our national security budget under the last Administration, it's time we rebuild our military and focus on keeping our nation safe!

This bill will help provide our troops and commanders with the resources they need to do their jobs – ensuring success in our missions and helping provide stability around the globe.

We must be ready and able to respond to any number of threats that exist or that might arise in the future – whether it is from rogue nations like North Korea and Iran, emboldened countries like Russia and China, or Islamic terrorist organizations that recognize no borders.

We must invest in the needs of our military to keep our people safe.

We listened to our military leaders, who called for more troops, better training, updated equipment, and improved infrastructure to make sure the United States military maintains its status as the best in the world.

In total, as Chairwoman Granger noted, this bill provides \$658.1 billion for the Department of Defense.

This includes funding increases for operations and maintenance to better prepare and equip our troops.

It also includes funding to support research and development that keeps our military on the forefront of new defense technologies – especially cybersecurity.

And it provides critical funding needed to replace and rebuild our aging, shrinking fleet of ships, aircraft, and other equipment, as well as restore vital stocks of missiles, bombs, and other munitions.

In addition to providing these physical and tactical needs, we also make sure that the men and women of our Armed Forces and their families are well-cared for.

The bill funds a 2.4 percent pay raise for our troops, and invests in medical care and other important Defense Health programs – including increases for TBI (traumatic brain injury) and mental health research, as well as for sexual assault prevention and response.

While this bill makes these necessary investments, it's critical that we make every dollar count – particularly when it comes to our military.

The bill reflects common-sense decisions to save taxpayer dollars wherever possible – but in a way that will not negatively affect the safety or success of our troops and missions. And in that regard, I commend you for working closely with the Armed Services Committee – our authorizing counterpart.

I want to thank Chairwoman Granger, Ranking Member Visclosky, the members of the Subcommittee, and the staff for fulfilling our duty to care for our military and protect this nation – and for having brought this important bill before the Committee in record time.

Just as the Constitution gives the power of the purse to the Congress, it also charges us with the responsibility to provide for the common Defense. This bill fulfills these two obligations.

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Opening Statement As Prepared

I am deeply appreciative to the Chairman, the Ranking Member, the members of the subcommittee, and the staff for their work on this bill.

The traumatic event of June 14 has put today's markup in a new light; we certainly feel a renewed sense of gratitude to the Capitol Police. Their bravery – particularly that of Special Agents Crystal Griner and David Bailey – is extraordinary, and we are lucky to have them protecting this building and the millions of people who pass through its doors.

The Capitol represents what makes this country great; it is a symbol of freedom and democracy. Whatever we can do to keep the people who work in and visit this institution safe, we need to do. I am pleased to say that this bill does just that.

As Chairman Yoder highlighted, the bill totals \$3.58 billion to maintain the functions of the Legislative Branch – supporting the operations of the House of Representatives and its support agencies.

Funding increases are targeted toward security and safety improvements in and around the Capitol Complex – including bolstering security at the O'Neill and Rayburn buildings and enhancing the safety of district offices to protect the people we serve at home.

The bill also increases funding to address aging or damaged facilities within the complex that will help protect the safety and health of Members, staff, and visitors.

Lastly, critical funding is targeted toward strengthened cybersecurity – further protecting our IT systems against bad actors.

These investments are necessary, and I'm glad we are able to support this work with this bill.

I'm also pleased that the Legislative Branch continues to lead by example – demonstrating fiscal restraint while providing important services to the people we represent. This includes maintaining the freeze on Member pay that has been in place since 2010.

At the same time, funding for the Government Accountability Office is prioritized – ensuring Congress has detailed and accurate data on how taxpayer dollars are spent, which allows us to do our oversight duties.

As Members of Congress, we are honored to come to this building every day with the charge of representing the will of the American people. This bill allows us to do so in a way we can all stand behind.

Again, I thank the Chairman, Ranking Member, and Subcommittee members for bringing this solid bill before the Full Committee today, and I ask my colleagues to support it today.

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