

Defense Bill Passes with Owens' Support

Bipartisan bill supports the troops, strengthens national security

Washington, May 27 - WASHINGTON – Yesterday, Congressman Bill Owens voted in favor of H.R. 1540, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012. The bipartisan bill provides a 1.6 percent increase in troop pay, robust funding to protect America's war fighters from IEDs and other threats, and provides soldiers with the tools they need to accomplish their mission abroad and return home as soon as possible. Congressman Bill Owens (D-NY) was successful in fighting to make available funding for several programs critical to Fort Drum and the continued security of the nation.

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“As we move closer to winding down operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, this bill will give American servicemen and women the support they need to complete the mission,” said Owens. *“In killing Osama Bin Laden, America's Armed Forces closed a major chapter in the war on terror. However, it is critical that we remain vigilant in the ongoing mission to further dismantle and disrupt terrorist groups that wish to harm the United States. This bipartisan legislation helps us to do just that.”*

Owens offered four amendments that were included in the final version of the legislation:

- **Army Construction and Land Acquisition (\$10,000,000):** to provide additional funding for military construction within the Army for utilities and ground improvements.
- **Cooperative Health Care Agreements (\$500,000):** to provide the Department of Defense to enter into cooperative health care agreements between local or regional health care systems and military installations with no inpatient medical facilities. This authority was granted to the Secretary of Defense in the 2010 National Defense Authorization.
- **Sniper Rifle Modification (\$2,506,000):** to provide additional funding to the Army for modification of weapons and other combat vehicles that promote national security objectives.
- **Cyber Workforce Development (\$4,000,000):** to provide additional funding to the Air Force to conduct research and education programs that support cyber workforce development to further national security efforts.

“These amendments will also allow local leaders to compete in an open process to both contribute to and benefit from a robust investment in national security,” Owens said.

Owens worked with Congressman Richard Hanna (R-NY) on the amendments to support Sniper Rifle Modification and Cyber Workforce Development. Collaboration on these amendments is

the latest in a series of efforts by Hanna and Owens to focus on progress for their districts and the country rather than partisanship. Hanna represents New York's 24th District, which includes the parts of Oneida County that Owens does not represent as well as neighboring Herkimer County.

“This bill is good for national security as well as the military personnel and defense-related industries that create jobs in Upstate New York. I am absolutely committed to making sure our troops deployed abroad have the resources, training, and flexibility they need to complete their missions and return home safely. This bill also invests in protecting our nation from future threats while demanding fiscal responsibility within the Pentagon. The bill importantly includes an increase in military pay—our war fighters deserve this,” said Hanna. ***“I was pleased to work with Congressman Owens to strengthen national security and support Upstate New York industries that help keep us all safe. Right here in Oneida and Herkimer counties we have the educational institutions, innovative industry, and dedicated military personnel to capitalize on the priorities included in this bill. This legislation will help New York students transition into the workforce and build national security careers right here at home.”***

In addition, Owens worked with representatives from Otis Technology in Lyons Falls to include language in the final bill that would ensure the Department of Defense includes certain procurement items in the base budget rather than contingency funds. This request would help small businesses like Otis plan for future contracts with the Department of Defense, and was written in coordination with local leaders as well as members of the Warrior Protection and Readiness Coalition.

H.R. 1540 builds upon previous funding levels that restore troop readiness and bolster counter-terrorism efforts, and includes more than \$33 million in military construction funding at Fort Drum. Bipartisan provisions in the legislation enhance equipment to protect soldiers against evolving enemy warfare tactics, ensure fair TRICARE premiums, and strengthen the quality of healthcare for soldiers and their families.

The bill passed with bipartisan support by a vote of 322-96.