

Bipartisan Defense Bill Passes House, Includes Three Griffin Amendments

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WASHINGTON –Congressman Tim Griffin (AR-02) issued the following statement on the House's passage of H.R. 1540, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2012 this afternoon:

“I was proud to support this year’s defense authorization bill. The bill includes essential funding for our Armed Forces, and it helps us address the national security and defense challenges we face in the twenty-first century. During the House Armed Services markup on May 11, 2011, I proposed three amendments that passed with bipartisan voice votes. I am pleased that each of the three provisions I proposed in Committee are included in the final bill.”

The first of these three provisions would provide essential funding for the procurement of flight simulators for air mobility aircraft.

“I requested and received a briefing by the Air Force and Air Mobility Command and was informed of a significant shortfall in aircraft training simulators for the Air Force. The shortfall is particularly acute among air mobility aircraft.”

This amendment provides \$25 million for the procurement of training simulators for air mobility aircraft. This money to fund these simulators is budget neutral and was taken from funds originally dedicated to Air Force aircraft procurement. The use of simulators in lieu of airplanes results in safer flight training, reductions in flight hours and fuel usage, and increases the service life of aircraft. This means cost reductions for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and savings of essential taxpayer dollars. The Air Force will disburse these funds in accordance with Air Force priorities, and this legislation requires the procurement process to be merit-based and competitive.

“There is a training gap for our Air Force pilots that could impact our country’s military readiness. It is my hope that this funding will go a long way towards the Air Force addressing this need,” Griffin said.

The second of Griffin’s provisions would help stem the tide of waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars at the DoD by establishing benchmarks to ensure the DoD meets their statutory requirement to produce auditable financial statements by 2017. The DoD manages financial improvement activities through the Financial Improvement and Audit Readiness (FIAR) Plan, which provides the strategy, methodology and means for monitoring progress to audit readiness as required by previous legislation.

“We already know that not every dollar spent at the Pentagon is spent wisely. Without actual records to examine, though, we cannot understand the scope of the problem and fix it to save wasted taxpayer dollars. My provision directs the DoD to report to Congress on the weaknesses they find in the execution of the FIAR Plan so we can ensure those deficiencies are addressed quickly and the 2017 deadline for DoD is achieved,” Griffin said.

Griffin's third provision responds to ongoing concerns over whether terror suspects are being tried in the most appropriate venue for their conduct and would ensure that all relevant parties are consulted before that decision is made. Specifically, it would require the U.S. Attorney General to consult with the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Defense prior to prosecuting a terror suspect in federal court. During this consultation, these parties would evaluate whether the accused should be prosecuted by a military commission and whether the accused should be transferred into military custody for purposes of intelligence interviews.

"We've seen several examples of terror groups launching direct attacks on U.S. soil. The averted bombings in Detroit and Times Square, and the cargo plane plots are just a few of the serious threats we have faced on our soil. My amendment would simply ensure that all options are considered when a possible terrorist is captured here in the United States," Griffin said.

Griffin also announced that he was pleased that the NDAA did not include funding for the F-35 Alternate Engine program.

"The House and Senate voted to kill the F-35 alternate engine, and the Pentagon cancelled the program. I support its cancellation and am pleased that the NDAA does not fund it. The bill does, however, allow research and testing on the alternate engine to continue, funded by the private sector, at no cost to the federal government. While today's defense authorization bill does not totally close the door on the alternate engine program, I am pleased that no further taxpayer dollars are spent on it," Griffin said.