

***Congressman Coffman believes the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, which was reported favorably by the House Armed Services Committee on a vote of 61 to 0 yesterday, still requires significant work.***

The bill authorizes \$550.4 billion in budget authority for the Department of Defense (DoD) and the national security programs of the Department of Energy (DoE). The bill specifically authorizes \$130 billion to support our nation's war efforts during fiscal year 2010.

In a statement released after the Committee's approval of the defense authorization bill, Coffman discussed some of the measure's most significant provisions:

"Our nation is at war, and the primary purpose of this bill is to support our troops. This bill provides a 3.4 percent pay raise for all service members, extends bonuses and incentive pay, expands TRICARE health coverage to reserve component members and their families for 180 days prior to mobilization, and also provides \$1.95 billion for family housing programs to support and expand the quality housing our military families deserve.

“I was pleased that the Committee did not include a provision to permanently ban expansion at Pinõn Canyon. There are no plans for expansion this year, but a permanent ban, as proposed, would have harmed both the U.S. Army and the economy of our State. I remain convinced that the Army’s plans, which do not include eminent domain, are fully justified and necessary, and will benefit the local community and state.

“I passed an amendment requiring a report on the usage of minerals generally occurring in low concentrations in the Defense supply chain. The U.S. currently has zero production capacity for some key so-called ‘rare earth’ components of military systems, leaving us totally dependent on foreign suppliers for critical parts. This is strategically dangerous, and I hope this report will be the start of an effort to secure capacity.

“Beyond that, the bill unfortunately falls short in several areas. I have a concern that this bill does not dedicate the resources necessary to prevail in Afghanistan. I was able to include an amendment which offers support to our senior military commanders in Afghanistan in their efforts to ensure they have the troops levels and types of forces needed to achieve the goals laid out by the President’s strategy. The amendment will allow them to use outside analysis that could be used for future resourcing decisions.

“Having served in Iraq with the U.S. Marine Corps, I saw what efforts were taken to turn around the situation there, and I don’t believe we are repeating those in Afghanistan. In fact, we appear to be only repeating the mistakes from early in the Iraq War, with incremental increases and failure to fully commit the resources necessary to win.

“Another big mistake in this legislation is a failure to correct the Obama Administration’s slashing of \$1.2 billion from national missile defense programs. Iran is currently focused on developing nuclear weapons, and North Korea is hard at work extending its military capability into space, posing a threat to the security of the United States. Despite all this, the Committee refused to restore funding. The reduction in missile defense should be of concern to all Americans. Without an investment in missile defense today, given the complexity of the science and engineering involved in developing new systems, we will not be able to respond to the threats to the United States of tomorrow.

“Finally, I was displeased that jurisdictional problems prevented the consideration of my amendment to improve the military voting system. Anybody who pays the slightest bit of attention to the issue of military voting knows that we have a significant problem, and as a former Secretary of State for Colorado - the official state election officer - and having been deployed overseas many times in my military career, I have had significant experience with the problem of guaranteeing election rights to uniformed voters. My amendment would have taken some simple steps to improve the military voting process and allow those who fight *for* our democracy to fully participate

*in*

our democracy. I will continue to work on this issue enthusiastically.”