

Association of the United States Army

Voice for the Army—Support for the Soldier



Supporting a Relevant and Ready Army at War

AUSA + 1st Session, 108th Congress = Some Very Good News

Our nation is at war. Today's challenges are complex, and threats are elusive and unpredictable. Sustained engagement of the U.S. Army is the norm, not the exception. Wherever the United States has a presence, you will find a Soldier.

While the Army willingly accepts and accomplishes every mission, it must have the resources necessary to take care of its people (active, Guard, Reserve, retired, civilians and their families) and properly train and equip Soldiers and their units. In its first session, the 108th Congress has risen to the challenge. In 2004, America will spend 3.4 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defense. **For the active Army**, endstrength will increase. **For the reserve components**, legislation authorizes access to and coverage for selected TRICARE programs. **For Soldiers and their families**, targeted pay raises, increased housing allowances, increased funding for barracks and family housing, and multiple tax initiatives are among the provisions in the new laws. **For retirees**, legislation expands combat-related eligibility for concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and disability pay, and authorizes full concurrent receipt, phased in over 10 years, for military retirees with at least 50 percent disability. **For civilians**, the law provides increased pay that achieves parity with the military pay raise. **Much has been accomplished; however, much more remains.**

AUSA has spoken and will continue to speak out, carrying the message to our elected representatives and to the American public. Some of the major objectives achieved during the last legislative session are listed below. Sustaining and improving upon these accomplishments will require continued diligent effort from all of us.

AUSA and others spoke out for:

- Increasing active Army endstrength by 40,000–50,000.
- Closing the pay gap between Soldiers and the private sector and providing pay increase parity for Department of the Army civilians.
- Eliminating out-of-pocket housing expenses for Soldiers and their families.
- Increasing funding to construct, modernize and upgrade infrastructure, including barracks and family housing.
- Adopting military tax fairness initiatives and, for reserve component soldiers and their families, authorizing full use of the commissary benefit.
- Repealing in its entirety the Department of Veterans' Affairs offset on retired military entitlement (concurrent receipt).

Congress responded by:

- Increasing endstrength by 2,400.
- Narrowing the pay gap with an average increase of 4.15 percent and targeted increases of up to 6.25 percent for mid- and senior-level NCOs and mid-level officers; providing pay increase parity for federal civilians.
- Reducing the average amount of housing expenses paid by servicemembers from the current 7.5 percent to 3.5 percent with the intent of eliminating the out-of-pocket expenses by FY 2005.
- Authorizing \$1.2 billion for the construction of 41 new barracks and \$775.6 million for construction and improvement of 3,900 family units, including privatization of more than 30,000 units. Other improvements are included within the \$9.7 billion total infrastructure funding.
- Increasing the death gratuity from \$6,000 to \$12,000 (tax free), retroactive to 11 September 2001; giving capital gains tax relief on home sales for military personnel; granting reserve component Soldiers tax deductions for overnight expenses and travel for drills more than 100 miles from home; expanding military personnel eligibility for tax-filing extensions; and authorizing full use of the commissary benefit by the reserve components.
- Extending eligibility for concurrent receipt to all 20-year military retirees with a Purple Heart or combat-related disability, including National Guardsmen and Reservists; authorizing full concurrent receipt, to be phased in over 10 years, for military retirees with more than 50 percent disability. **But** this measure does not include all eligible retirees, so AUSA will continue the fight.

People

People Readiness and Future Force

AUSA and others spoke out for:

- Funding the Federal Impact Aid Program in the U.S. Department of Education budget to preclude the children of military families from being disadvantaged in public schooling.
- Authorizing and fully funding the provisions of required health and dental support readiness services to all reserve component Soldiers and authorizing access to TRICARE for reserve component personnel and their families.
- Funding Operation and Maintenance (O&M) to sustain and improve readiness for the active Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve.
- Funding and staffing full-time manning positions in the reserve components at 100 percent.
- Maintaining the Army's strategic advantage and advancing modernization in its Current Force.
- Accelerating funding for Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missiles.
- Accelerating fielding of the Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs).
- Developing the Future Force for the transforming Army.
- Funding the RAH-66 Comanche helicopter to significantly improve the ability of Army aviation reconnaissance and attack formations to operate on the battlefield.
- Providing additional C-17 airlift capabilities by continuing acquisition of the aircraft to enhance the timely projection of combat power anywhere in the world.
- Ensuring adequate stocks of munitions to support training and the warfighting stockpile.

Congress responded by:

- Authorizing \$30 million in Impact Aid spending, plus \$5 million to support local agencies that aid family members with severe disabilities.
- Authorizing immediate medical and dental screening and care for selected Reservists upon alert or mobilization notification; authorizing a one-year trial program to include: providing TRICARE enrollment on a cost-share basis for those nonmobilized Reservists and their families who are unemployed or lack health insurance; providing coverage to mobilized Reservists and families up to 90 days prior to the start of the Reservists' active duty and extending eligibility for transitional medical care to 180 days.
- Funding O&M accounts with \$24.6 billion for active Army, \$4.2 billion for the Army National Guard and \$1.9 billion for the Army Reserve; Congress also approved approximately \$26.35 billion in Army funding in the Fiscal Year 2003 Defense Supplemental.
- Increasing full-time Army reserve component manning endstrength to 39,973 personnel, a 3.5 percent increase over Fiscal Year 2003. The authorization includes an increase of 837 Army dual-status military technicians, a 2.7 percent increase.
- Funding upgrades and modifications for the UH-60 Black Hawk, AH-64 Apache Longbow and CH-47 Chinook helicopters; funding enhancements to the M1A2 Abrams tank (System Enhancement Program), M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle and combat support and combat service support equipment; authorizing \$73.8 million for eight Shadow Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle systems and \$12.4 million for their continued development.
- Authorizing \$651.6 million for procurement, which provides 30 more missiles than the Army's unfunded requirement.
- Authorizing \$955 million for 301 Stryker vehicles for the fourth SBCT, with an additional \$61 million for further research and development on medium armored vehicles.
- Authorizing \$1.7 billion for the Future Combat Systems (FCS) and \$2 billion for Army Science and Technology programs. **But** program funding is separated into three vulnerable elements.
- Authorizing \$1.1 billion for engineering and manufacturing development. **But** DoD supports procurement of only 650 Comanches, while the Army's requirement remains 819.
- Funding \$2.0 billion for procurement of 11 C-17s.
- Authorizing \$1.4 billion for the Army's top unfunded requirement of ammunition programs—\$103 million above the President's request.



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