

Association of the United States Army

Voice for the Army—Support for the Soldier



America's Army: The Strength of the Nation

AUSA + 1st Session, 110th Congress = Some Good News, But...

As the guardians of our nation's freedom, American Soldiers are the strength of the nation. After more than six years of war, our Soldiers have proven it takes boots on the ground to achieve success on today's battlefields, just as American Soldiers have shown for more than 230 years. In an era of persistent conflict, well-equipped and well-trained Soldiers are vital to the protection and promotion of our national security.

In its 1st Session, the 110th Congress made some progress toward allocating much-needed resources to the Army. Through the use of supplemental appropriations as well as authorizations and appropriations to the base budget, Congress provided resources for continuing current operations worldwide, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, and for resetting the force; reduced the pay gap between military and private sector pay; substantially increased the death gratuity for Department of the Army civilians; blocked Department of Defense efforts to offset rising health care costs on the backs of retirees; and took steps to ensure that military children receive high-quality education.

However, there is more to be done. By only delaying increases in TRICARE fees, cost shares and pharmaceutical costs for retirees, Congress merely postponed making the necessary decisions to ensure affordable health care for those who, even after retirement, continue to serve as key influencers helping to encourage and sustain the nation's All-Volunteer Force. Moreover, reducing the required funds for the Future Combat Systems, the Army's major modernization program, will delay insertion of technological advances into the current force and escalate program costs.

If the nation wants fully manned, mission ready land forces, resources must follow. All AUSA members must work together to ensure funding of initiatives to ensure Soldiers and their families have a quality of life commensurate with those they serve and to secure resources that will restore balance, provide depth to Army capabilities and build capacity for the future.

Each member of AUSA is a Torchbearer, carrying this message to our elected representatives and the American public. Your voice matters! Help keep our Army Strong.

Here are some of the major objectives for the last legislative session:

AUSA and others spoke out for:

- Increasing active Army endstrength to 700,000.
- Closing the pay gap between Soldiers and the private sector and providing pay increase parity for Department of the Army civilians.
- Repealing the law that reduces military survivor benefit (SBP) annuities by the amount of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments.
- Not increasing TRICARE fees/deductibles.
- Funding reserve component endstrength at 358,000 for Army National Guard and 206,000 for Army Reserve.
- Increasing the death gratuity payment for federal civilians to \$100,000.

Congress responded by:

- Temporarily authorizing active Army endstrength up to 525,400 and to 547,400 between 2008 and 2010 but without base budget funding.
- Decreasing the current pay gap by approving a January 2008 pay raise of 3.5 percent for military personnel and providing pay increase parity for Department of the Army civilians.
- Authorizing a special payment of \$50/month to survivors affected by the SBP/DIC offset beginning 1 October 2008 and increasing by \$10/month for five years.
- Barring the Defense Department from increasing any TRICARE Prime or Standard Fees, pharmacy co-pays or TRICARE Reserve Select premiums, but only through 30 September 2008.
- Authorizing and funding Army National Guard endstrength at 351,300 and Army Reserve endstrength at 205,000.
- Increasing the death gratuity for federal civilians to \$100,000.

People

AUSA and others spoke out for:

- Repealing in its entirety the Department of Veterans' Affairs offset on retired military entitlement (concurrent receipt).
- Reducing from 60 to 55 the age retired reserve component personnel receive their pay and benefits.
- Funding the Federal Impact Aid Program to preclude children of military families from being disadvantaged in public schooling.
- Funding accelerated modernization of reserve component equipment.
- Maintaining the Army's strategic advantage and advancing modernization in its current force.
- Funding for Army procurement items deemed essential for continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Ensuring adequate stocks of munitions to support training and the warfighting stockpile.
- Ensuring adequate prepositioned equipment stocks.
- Developing the Future Force for the transforming Army.

Congress responded by:

- Authorizing 100 percent of disabled retirees rated unemployable to receive full concurrent receipt retroactive to 1 January 2005.
- Reducing the age reserve component personnel receive retired pay by three months for every aggregate 90 days of active duty service in support of a contingency operation after the FY2008 Defense Authorization Act is signed into law.
- Maintaining the current funding level for Impact Aid by authorizing \$30 million for schools that benefit dependents of servicemembers and Department of Defense civilians and an additional \$5 million for schools that benefit dependents with severe disabilities and authorizing (but not funding) \$10 million for districts experiencing a change in student load due to rebasing or base realignment.
- Authorizing \$980 million for procurement of critical, high priority equipment to address reserve component unfunded equipment shortfalls.
- Authorizing helicopter upgrades and modernization for Abrams tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles; \$5.2 billion for procurement of Army aviation assets to include the Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter and the Joint Cargo Aircraft; \$2.9 billion for Stryker vehicles; retaining Army responsibility and operational control of the Extended Range Multi-purpose Unmanned Aerial Vehicle.
- Authorizing \$17.6 billion for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles; \$3.3 billion to up-armor additional High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles; more than \$18 billion to replace equipment lost in combat; \$1.2 billion for personal protection and gear such as body armor; \$4.77 billion for improvised explosive device defeat equipment and research.
- Authorizing \$2.2 billion for Army ammunition programs.
- Requiring the Defense Department to report annually the status of prepositioned equipment stocks and plans to reconstitute stockpiles.
- Authorizing \$3.4 billion for the Future Combat Systems.

Take up the torch and join our crusade!

BECOME a member STAY a member RECRUIT a member



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