

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, 111th Congress = More Work Ahead

In this era of persistent conflict, the U.S Army continues to play a central, enduring role in protecting the nation. Demand for Army forces currently exceeds the sustainable supply and limits their availability for other contingencies. In response, the Army is transforming to a versatile, adaptable, networked force, trained and ready for full-spectrum operations, operating on a predictable and sustainable rotational cycle. To sustain the quality of the all-volunteer force, the Army is committed to providing the quality of life deserved by those who serve the nation.

In its first session, the 111th Congress authorized the full amount of the President's budget request for the Army and additional funds to speed the purchase of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected All-Terrain Vehicle (M-ATV) so important for Soldiers fighting in Afghanistan. They also granted the Secretary of Defense the authority to increase the size of the Army by 30,000 during the next two years, which is vital to ensuring that the Army can meet the demands of the nation's security. Congress moved to help Soldiers and their families by providing a 3.4 percent pay increase, blocking a proposed increase in TRICARE copayments for retirees and authorizing compensation for those who provide care for catastrophically injured or ill servicemembers. And they extended to spouses the right that servicemembers already enjoy to keep their original state residency when they move to new posts. These and other provisions in the FY 2010 National Defense Authorization Act were supported by AUSA, and their passage was vitally important to our men and women in uniform.

However, some important proposals were not authorized. The long-sought phaseout of the disability offset to retired pay for medically retired servicemembers was blocked by the Senate despite support from the White House and the House of Representatives. Similarly, a plan to repeal the deduction of VA survivor benefits from military Survivor Benefits Plan annuities was dropped for lack of funding offsets. And a provision that would have authorized retroactive reserve component (RC) retirement age credit for active-duty service since 11 September 2001 (current law credits only service since 28 January 2008) also failed for lack of funding. Separately, the House passed a bill that would fund increases in reimbursable rates to TRICARE and Medicare providers, but as of mid-December, the Senate had not acted on the bill.

The coming decades will require the Army to operate across the entire spectrum of conflict. To do so, the Army must continue to grow, rebalance and transform itself—and it must be provided the resources to do so. Progress was made for FY 2010, but there is still much more work ahead.

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
- Not increasing TRICARE fees/deductibles
- Enacting legislation to authorize access to TRICARE by RC gray-area retirees

Congress responded by:

Authorizing active Army endstrength to increase by 30,000 above Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 levels during FY 2011 and FY 2012 if sufficient funding is requested in the budget

Decreasing the current pay gap by approving a January 2010 pay raise of 3.4 percent for military personnel

Fully funding Defense Health Programs and preventing increases in copayments for inpatient care in civilian hospitals under TRICARE Standard but only through 30 September 2010

Extending eligibility for TRICARE Standard to RC gray-area retirees who have not yet reached age 60

People

- Allowing military spouses to claim a permanent state of residence
- Allowing Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) employees to redeem unused sick leave at retirement

Authorizing military spouses to claim residency in the same state as their sponsor

Phasing in application of unused sick leave toward length of service at retirement under FERS

AUSA and others spoke out for:

- Funding RC endstrength at 371,000 for Army National Guard and 206,000 for Army Reserve
- Funding shortfalls of RC equipment
- Funding accelerated modernization of RC equipment
- Achieving affordable, adequate housing for single Soldiers and Soldiers with families
- Funding the Federal Impact Aid Program to preclude children of military families from being disadvantaged in public schooling
- Funding Army procurement items deemed essential for continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan
- Ensuring adequate stocks of munitions to support training and warfighting stockpiles
- Maintaining the Army's strategic advantage and advancing modernization in its Current Force
- Developing the Future Force for the transforming Army

Congress responded by:

Authorizing Army National Guard endstrength at 358,200 and Army Reserve endstrength at 205,000

Authorizing \$6.9 billion to address RC equipment shortfalls

Authorizing \$600 million for procurement of critical, high-priority equipment to address RC unfunded equipment shortfalls

Authorizing \$2.2 billion to support and expand high-quality housing for all servicemembers and their families

Authorizing funding for Impact Aid of \$30 million for schools that benefit dependents of servicemembers and Department of Defense civilians, \$14 million for districts experiencing a change in student load due to rebasing or base realignment, and \$5 million for schools that benefit dependents with severe disabilities

Authorizing \$6.7 billion for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles; \$4.3 billion to up-armor additional High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs); more than \$11 billion to replace equipment lost in combat; and \$2.2 billion for equipment and research to defeat improvised explosive devices

Authorizing \$2.05 billion for Army ammunition programs;

Authorizing full funding for Army helicopter programs and M1 Abrams tank modernization, M2 Bradley and Patriot Air and Missile Defense system

Authorizing \$2.45 billion for the communications network and spinout equipment sets from the Future Combat Systems program

Take up the torch and join our crusade!

BECOME a member

STAY a member

RECRUIT a member



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