

Congressman Ron Paul U.S. House of Representatives May 24, 2002

Oppose the "Supplemental" Spending Bill

Mr. Speaker, supporters of fiscal responsibility, a rational foreign policy, and constitutional government can find little, if anything, to support in the Supplemental Appropriations bill (HR 4775). HR 4775 enlarges the federal deficit, increases the size of the federal government, jeopardizes the Social Security trust fund, and, by removing resources from individuals and placing them under government control, depresses economic growth.

Despite being sold as a national security bill, most of the spending in this bill bears little relationship to protecting the American people from terrorism. For example, this bill contains funding for the Securities and Exchange Commission, federal courts, and various welfare programs. In addition, this bill spends millions on unconstitutional foreign aid. Mr. Speaker, some may say that foreign aid promotes national security, but if that were true America would be the most beloved country on earth. After all, almost every country in the world has in some way benefited from Congress' willingness to send the American people's money overseas.

Even much of the military spending in this bill has no relationship to legitimate national security needs. Instead it furthers an interventionist foreign policy which is neither constitutional nor in the best interests of the American people. For example, this supplemental contains a stealth attempt to shift our policy toward Colombia, expanding our already failed drug war to include direct participation in Colombia's 38-year civil war. Though a bill on Colombia was scheduled for markup in the International Relations committee, for some reason it was pulled at the last minute. Therefore, the committee has not been able to debate this policy shift on Colombia. We are instead expected just not to notice, I suppose, that the policy shift has been included in this bill.

Our expanded interventionism in Colombia is called "counterterrorism," but no one has even attempted to demonstrate that Colombia's civil war poses even a remote terrorist threat to the United States. In fact, the only terrorist threat from Colombia I have seen actually counsels against our deepening involvement. According to House International Relations Committee briefing materials made available last month:

"We have hundreds of temporary duty personnel in Colombia on any given day, in addition to our agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), military advisors, contractors, and embassy personnel. If U.S. presence expands to help Colombia fight terrorism as well, these alarming IRA explosives tactics could be used directly and intentionally against American facilities and employees."

If anything, this is an argument against getting more deeply involved in Colombia's internal affairs, as it rightly recognizes that our involvement will only inflame the other side and thus open the door to retaliation against our interventionism.

The war on drugs in Colombia is failing miserably. Under "Plan Colombia," coca production has increased 25 percent in the period between 2000 and 2001. The production of cocaine increased by roughly the same amount. More cocaine was coming out of Colombia into the United States at the end of 2001, during Plan Colombia, than at the end of 2000, before Plan Colombia. Is this a reason to expand our involvement into Colombia's civil war?

US commercial interests- not national security- are a big factor in our shifting policy toward Colombia. We have already seen an administration request for an additional \$98 million to help protect the Caño-Limon Pipeline - jointly owned by the Colombian national oil company and Occidental Petroleum. This supplemental will provide for the first installment of this money to be paid to protect Occidental's pipeline.

We are being dragged into a civil war in Colombia that has nothing to do with us and nothing to do with international terrorism. Those who want to send American money and troops into the Colombian quagmire do not want debate, because their claims that a 38 year civil war somehow has something to do with 9/11 ring hollow.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I must object to this bill on the grounds that it enables further increases in government spending by providing a method to increase the debt ceiling. It is bad enough that Congress is increasing the debt limit, but this rule provides a procedure whereby the debt limit will be raised in conference, away from public scrutiny. It makes a mockery of open government to impose more government debt on hardworking Americans and future generations by subterfuge.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, HR 4775 contains increases in unconstitutional spending on wide variety of welfare programs and foreign aid. It also ignores the true security interests of the American people by spending valuable resources on a flawed Colombian policy. This bill also creates conditions for further expansions in spending by providing a procedure to raise the debt ceiling safe from public scrutiny. HR 4775 thus threatens the liberty and prosperity of all Americans so I urge my colleagues to reject this bill.