

Statement on H. R. 6599, Military Construction/Veterans Affairs Appropriations

1 August 2008

Madam Speaker, I rise in reluctant opposition to this appropriations legislation. It is unfortunate that my colleagues have decided to combine the necessary appropriations contained in the Veterans Affairs portion of this bill with the bloated and unconstitutional military construction appropriations. In the past I have voted in favor of Veterans Affairs appropriation bills when they were not combined with unwise and wasteful spending of other appropriations like military construction.

This appropriation will allocate \$9.5 billion to close bases in the United States while spending nearly \$12 billion building other facilities overseas! As a matter of fact, any construction of new bases in the United States is prohibited by this bill. While I am not necessarily in favor of building new bases in the United States, we certainly should not be spending money to close existing domestic bases in favor of constructing new bases overseas.

The bill will transfer more than \$200 million to NATO, an organization with no purpose that should be disbanded immediately, for the construction of NATO facilities in countries where we have no business having our military in the first place.

We have been told that we will have no permanent bases in Iraq, but then again we have no "permanent" bases in Korea either even though we have had a military presence there for more than 50 years. It is unclear how much of this \$12 billion will go to building new facilities to maintain an indefinite presence in Iraq, but any such expenditure will be counterproductive to US national interests.

This appropriation increases construction funds to the service branches by as much as 50

percent over current levels, which is financially dangerous and unsustainable particularly in view of next year's record budget deficit.

Madam Speaker, it is a tragedy that necessary spending to keep promises to American veterans should be held hostage to this out of control spending on maintaining an unnecessary and dangerous US empire overseas. We are doing no favors to today's veterans or to future veterans – or to the US taxpayers -- with this appropriations bill.