



May 2, 2002

***President and Republicans Put Defense First***

**Senate Democrats Should  
Just Say “Yes” to Moving  
the Defense Appropriation Bill First**

As the Majority party, Senate Democrats set the schedule — they get to choose which bills will come to the Senate Floor and in which order. So last year, even as U.S. troops were risking their lives fighting the war on terrorism, Senate Democrats decided to delay consideration of the Defense Appropriation bill — which funds our military and the men and women in uniform — until the final days of the legislative session. One possible reason: Democrats wanted to use the Department of Defense bill to leverage higher levels of unrelated spending.

Republicans would rather put defense first. They have joined President Bush in calling on Senate Democrats to move this year’s Defense Appropriation bill before any of the other 12 appropriations bills are considered. In at least six speeches over the last two months, President Bush has made the case for early action on the defense bill, especially during this time of war. And Senate Republicans stand behind the Commander-in-Chief, having sent a letter to Senator Daschle on March 19, 2002, echoing the President’s request [see attached letter].

Thus far, no commitment has come from the Democrat majority. Recent signals, however, point to a repeat of last year’s scheme, with defense once again being pushed to the end of the line. Such delay sends the wrong message at the wrong time.

**Why Defense First?**

It should go without saying that our military’s funding and support should be our nation’s top priority in time of war. Yet last year, Senate Democrats decided that additional funding for what they deemed necessary for “homeland security” was more important than timely funding our military as it fought the war on terrorism. The additional funding Democrats fought for (they initially sought \$15 billion and then halved that amount) was over and beyond \$40 billion already allocated in the wake of

September 11th — and it broke an agreed-upon spending ceiling, which spurred a vow from the President to veto the bill if such funding was included.

As *Congress Daily* described it:

“Senate Majority Leader Daschle and Appropriations Chairman Byrd appear to be setting up a game of political chicken over the \$7.5 billion homeland security spending package they now plan to attach to the FY02 Defense appropriations bill. . . . Byrd announced Wednesday he would add the extra \$7.5 billion to the Defense bill, which is already carrying a \$20 billion anti-terrorism supplemental, at the markup next week” [11/29/01].

## **No Reason to Delay**

Last year’s Defense Appropriation bill finally passed the Senate on December 20, 2001 — **81 days after** the October 1 fiscal year deadline for passage of yearly funding bills, and **73 days after** the United States had begun military operations in Afghanistan.

The Republicans’ call to move the defense funding bill first is an attempt to preclude a repeat of last year’s scenario. The clock is ticking. Less than 80 scheduled work days in the Senate remain before the end of the fiscal year. This year the Senate should pass the Defense Appropriation bill first, not last. It is the right thing to do for our soldiers, for our citizens, and for our country.

Staff Contact: Dr. Yvonne Bartoli, 224-2946

## Select Quotes From President George Bush on Defense Spending First

“I have submitted a budget to the United States Congress which makes a priority of national defense. . . . In times of war, I ought to have the defense appropriations bill on my desk as soon as possible. We don’t need any people playing politics with the defense of the United States of America.” [Albuquerque, 4/29/02]

“And so I urge Congress to get moving on the appropriations process, particularly when it comes to the Defense bill. Generally, here in Washington, they wait and put the Defense bill out last. . . . It seems to me, if we’re at war — and we are at war — that they ought to get the Defense Appropriations bill out first and not play games with the Defense Appropriations [bill]. And so I’m asking Congress to do that. I’ve made this clear to the leadership. I had a breakfast, they seemed to be very responsive, and now it’s time for the appropriators to act.” [Washington, D.C., 4/16/02]

“. . . And my call to the Congress is that, instead of passing the defense budget last, like they always try to do, let’s pass it first. Let’s get it done. Let’s make sure our troops understand they’re going to have the best equipment, the best training and the best pay possible early in the budget cycle, not late.” [Old Greenwich, Connecticut, 4/9/02]

“And so not only do I expect Congress to support our military and pass this budget, I expect them to do it early rather than late. The history of the United States Congress is such that they hold back the defense appropriations bill to the last minute. That’s bad policy. It’s bad policy in times of peace, and it’s terrible policy in times of war. I expect and hope the first appropriation bill to my desk is to fund the United States military.” [St. Louis, 3/18/02]

“. . . But now’s not the time to be playing politics with the military budget. They [Congress] need to get it to my desk early. Generally the defense appropriations [bill] is the last one to the president’s desk. It ought to be the first one this year.” [O’Fallon, Missouri, 3/18/02]

“. . . Oftentimes Congress waits until the last days of the fiscal year in order to pass the defense budget. That’s bad budgeting practice in times of peace. It’s really bad budgeting practice in times of war. I expect the United States Congress to not only pass the budget as I submitted, I expect them to make it the first order of business, so we can plan for this war.” [Fayetteville, North Carolina, 3/15/02]

Attachment: Letter to Majority Leader Daschle

United States Senate  
OFFICE OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7010

March 19, 2002

Honorable Tom Daschle  
Office of the Majority Leader  
S-221, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Tom:

On Friday, the President issued a clear call for the Congress to act on the Defense Appropriations bill as the first order of business when we begin consideration of next fiscal year's spending bills.

We applaud the President's commanding leadership of our Nation's war on terrorism and we support his request that we put defense first during this time of war. We believe that such an action will send a strong signal to a watching world that as a Nation we remain determined in our resolve to make America secure.

Our men and women in the military are putting our Nation first by risking and sacrificing their lives to defend our liberties. We believe that as a Congress we should demonstrate that we are equally committed to them by providing the resources our military needs to successfully prosecute the war.

It is imperative that we demonstrate our support for our Commander-in-Chief and for our military at this time. We strongly believe that the Senate should consider the Defense Appropriations bill first when we begin deliberation of the annual appropriations bills, and we respectfully request that you schedule it accordingly.

Sincerely,

Ted Stevens  
John Warner  
Pete Domenici  
Arlen Specter

Trent Lott  
Don Nickles  
Chuck Hagel

Honorable Tom Daschle

March 19, 2002

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Olympia Snowe

Gordon Smith

Phil Gramm

John Ensign

Larry E. Craig

Fred Thompson

Mike DeWine

Jesse Helms

Kay Bailey Hutchison

Jim Bunning

Frank H. Murkowski

James Inhofe

Richard G. Lugar

Ben Nighthorse Campbell

Michael Enzi

Bob Smith

Bill Frist

Peter Fitzgerald

Richard Shelby

Tim Hutchinson

George V. Voinovich

Kit Bond

Wayne Allard

Chuck Grassley

Mike Crapo

Jon Kyl

John McCain

Thad Cochran

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Susan Collins

Conrad Burns

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