

May 22, 2008: House Passes H.R. 5658, the FY 2009 National Defense Authorization Act

(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Robert J. Wittman (VA-01) today announced that the House of Representatives passed H.R. 5658, the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 by a vote of 384 to 23.

H.R. 5658 authorizes \$531.4 billion for the Department of Defense (DoD) and the national security programs of the Department of Energy (DoE). It also includes \$70 billion to support ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan during fiscal year 2009.

"H.R. 5658 strikes the right balance between funding the current needs of our active duty personnel and our nation's veterans and providing for future capabilities and technologies to meet emerging threats," said Wittman. H.R. 5658 includes a 3.9% across-the-board pay raise for all service members in 2009 and an extension of the authority of the DoD to offer bonuses and incentive pay. The bill also prohibits fee increases in TRICARE and the TRICARE pharmacy. "Our nation's veterans deserve our unequivocal commitment to ensuring that they receive the benefits they have earned," Wittman said.

Key provisions were included in H.R. 5658 with the support of Congressman Wittman:

- Authorization for one additional Virginia Class Submarine with an additional \$722 million in advanced procurement/advance construction to enable the Navy to start procuring two ships per year beginning in FY10. Formalizes the teaming agreement for construction of the Virginia Class Submarine.

- A requirement that the Secretary of Defense to include an assessment of the attack submarine force structure requirement in the 2009 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and to base such an assessment on combatant commander requirements.

- A requirement that the Secretary of the Navy provide Congress a report assessing the cost and schedule implications of returning the USS Kennedy to service or keeping the USS Kitty Hawk in service, in order to maintain the statutory requirement of 11 active aircraft carriers, following the proposed decommissioning of the USS Enterprise and until the USS Ford reaches initial operating capability.

- A requirement that the Secretary of Defense conduct a transportation needs assessment to assess the magnitude of any improvements required at military reservation access points to address the impact of any actions, such as BRAC, at that installation by the Department of Defense.

- \$18 million for expenses to dispose of obsolete vessels in the National Defense Reserve Fleet, including the James River Fleet, through the Maritime Administration.

"As co-chairman of the Congressional Shipbuilding Caucus, I believe that we must construct a minimum of 12 ships per year to both stabilize the workforce and industrial base and to ensure that we grow the fleet to a minimum of 313 ships," said Wittman. "These provisions are critical to that effort."

The following key projects with impact on the First District of Virginia were included at Congressman Wittman's request:

- \$1.4 million for the expansion of the Free-Electron Laser program at Jefferson Laboratory through the Air Force Research and Development account.

- \$6.53 million for construction of the Marine Corps Base Quantico Officer Candidate School Headquarters Facility.

- \$5 million for acceleration of the Directed Energy and Electric Weapon Systems program, specifically the Electromagnetic Railgun at Dahlgren.

-- A \$10 million increase in funding for Research and Development, Navy, to support risk reduction activities for the Undersea Launched Missile Study (ULMS) and the associated planned for the next Sea Based Strategic Deterrent (SBSD).

- \$4.076 million to construct a Vehicle Paint Facility at Fort Eustis to support the preparation for and painting of approximately 1600 pieces of vehicular equipment. The majority of this equipment belongs to the 7th Sustainment Brigade, which is one of the Army's most frequently deployed units.

"These projects are critical to the missions and programs being carried out at key facilities in the First District and I am pleased that they were included in H.R. 5658," Wittman added.