

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) voted yesterday to provide the necessary resources to quickly and efficiently reverse declining trends in military readiness, as well as increase pay and health care benefits for our service members.

“The brave men and women who sacrifice so much to protect our country deserve the best equipment on the ground and the best health care and support when they come home,” **said Arcuri**

“The American military is the finest in the world and we must make sure we maintain that greatness. This bill protects our troops and their families and helps ensure that the brave men and women who serve our country have the resources they need and deserve.”

The conference report on the Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 1585) passed the House last night by an overwhelming bipartisan majority and is expected to be approved by the Senate and signed into law.

The Conference Report on H.R.1585 includes:

- Critical support for troops and their families by providing a 3.5 percent pay increase for troops that goes above the President’s request and blocks a fee increase in the military health care program (TRICARE);

- Provisions from the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act to ensure wounded service members receive the highest quality care as well as increase the efficiency and accountability of the Veterans’ Administration (VA) health care system; and

- Creation of a Strategic Readiness Fund to address equipment shortfalls, full funding for the Army’s and Marine Corps’ equipment reset requirements, and authorization of new resources to provide the National Guard and Reserve with critically needed equipment.

The Legislation would allocate new resources for additional Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles (MRAPs,) up-armored Humvees and body armor. The legislation also includes resources for efforts to stop Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) that have proven to be a threat to American troops in Iraq.

Included in the Conference Report on H.R. 1585, is critical language secured by Arcuri authorizing \$6.6 million to complete construction of a new NEADS facility in Rome, NY.

Earlier this month, Arcuri announced that he was able to secure \$6.6 million in congressionally-directed funding in the Fiscal Year 2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Conference Report, which passed the House of Representatives. As a federal military construction project, funds cannot be appropriated to complete construction of the NEADS facility without prior authorization.

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