



COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

DAVID R. OBEY, CHAIRMAN

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OBEY FLOOR STATEMENT ON THE 2010 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI), the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, made the following statement on the House Floor today during debate on the Senate Amendment to H.R. 4899, the 2010 Supplemental Appropriations Bill:

“I have a double, and conflicting, obligation. As Chairman, I have the obligation to bring this supplemental before the House to allow the institution to work its will.

“But I also have the obligation to my conscience to indicate – by my individual vote – my profound skepticism that this action will accomplish much more than to serve as a recruiting incentive for those who most want to do us ill.

“Last year, as the Administration was undertaking its Afghanistan review, I expressed my concern that the best policy in the world could not succeed if we did not have the tools on the ground – namely the effective cooperation of the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan – to accomplish it.

“I submit today, that those critical tools are not at hand. The Afghan government has not demonstrated the focused determination, reliability and judgment necessary to bring this effort to a rational and successful conclusion.

“Even if we could have greater confidence in that government’s capacity, it would likely take so long that it will obliterate our ability to make the kinds of long term investments in our own country that are so desperately needed.

“We have appropriated over \$1 trillion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to date, more than \$700 billion to Iraq and \$300 billion for Afghanistan. These wars have been paid for with borrowed money.

“What’s happened with this bill is a good indication of the tensions and the false choices that we face. The bill started in March as a domestic disaster relief and youth summer jobs bill. The Senate added war funding. Then, we tried to do something about other emergencies this year, such as:

- the loss of more than 100,000 teachers’ jobs because of devastating state and local budget cuts
- border security vulnerabilities, and
- a shortfall in Pell grant funding because more students qualify for aid due to the economic recession.

“The House tried to fund those emergencies – which were largely paid for with offsets to other programs. But now, true to form, virtually everything we have attempted to do this year to address the economic crisis and emergencies on the domestic side of the ledger has fallen by the wayside.

“And on the current course, we will face the very same situation again next year and the following year as well.

“Military experts tell us that it will take us at least 10 more years to achieve any acceptable outcome in Afghanistan. We have already been there 9 years. I believe it is too high a price to pay.

“To those who say we must pay it because we’re going after Al Qaeda, I would note that Afghanistan is where Al Qaeda **USED** to be.

“Today, there are fewer than 100 Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, which was publicly confirmed last month by CIA chief Panetta. Al Qaeda has relocated to other countries and regions.

“I have the highest respect and appreciation for our troops who have done everything asked of them. They are being let down by the inability of the governments of Afghanistan and in some instances Pakistan to do their parts.

“I would be willing to support additional war funding – provided that Congress would vote – up or down – explicitly on whether or not to continue this policy after a new National Intelligence Estimate is produced.

“But absent that discipline, I cannot look my constituents in the eye and say that this operation will hurt our enemies more than us.

“And so, I will reluctantly vote no.”

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