

## **News from U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC)**

Assistant to the Democratic Leader

Ranking Member, Committee on the Budget

US House of Representatives – Washington, DC

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### **Spratt Secures Benefits for U.S. Troops in Defense Bill**

WASHINGTON – The U.S. House of Representatives this week approved a defense bill that included two amendments by U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC) to improve the quality of life for active-duty troops and their families.

One of Spratt's amendments will increase funding for National Guard and Reserve Family Assistance Centers by \$35.6 million. The Family Assistance Centers supply a range of aid, information, and referral services to families of soldiers who are deployed or mobilized. They have been instrumental in helping family members of South Carolina National Guard and Reserve personnel called to duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“The centers are a one-stop shop for guidance on ID cards, answers to TRICARE questions, legal counseling, and similar such services,” said Spratt. “The Centers need more funding to meet the increased demand resulting from activation of 165,000 Guard and Reserve personnel.”

Another amendment Spratt authored will provide interest-free loans to service members deployed on extended duty in a combat zone. “Making interest-free loans is one way we can help families who face a stretch-out in finances when family members are away on deployments,” Spratt said.

Spratt offered a third amendment to give selected pay raises to non-commissioned officers and warrant officers, and to provide those serving in combat \$250,000 of group life insurance at government expense. House Republican leaders refused to allow Spratt to offer this amendment on the House floor.

Spratt's amendment would have transferred \$414 million from ballistic missile defense to cover (1) a \$300 million pay raise for noncommissioned officers and warrant officers, (2) \$50 million to provide \$250,000 in life insurance for every soldier in a combat zone, and (3) \$64 million for better technology to protect our troops, such as research into ways to disable remote-controlled roadside bombs.

Spratt argued that the \$414 million reduction in missile defense “means very little to the missile defense program, with \$10 billion in overall funding, but it means a great deal to our troops, and they deserve it.”

The 2005 defense authorization bill, having been passed by the House, now moves to the Senate.

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