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LARSON: DEFENSE BILL GIVES STRONG SUPPORT TO MILITARY PROGRAMS WITH TIES TO CONNECTICUT
Criticizes GOP Effort to Increase Debt Ceiling

WASHINGTON, D.C.- The U.S. House of Representatives today passed a defense spending bill for Fiscal Year 2005, containing \$416 billion in funding for national defense programs, including those that are partly manufactured in Connecticut. The Department of Defense Appropriations Act, H.R. 4613, passed by a vote of 403 to 17.

◆ This bill funds many defense programs vital to Connecticut, ◆ said Larson. ◆ The F/A-22 Raptor, the Joint Strike Fighter and the Black Hawk helicopter program have been given strong support. The bill means a strong investment not only in our military, but also in Connecticut's industries and workforce. I will continue working to guard funding for Connecticut programs and the troops as the bill moves to conference committee. ◆

The bill includes:

- ◆ \$2.3 billion for Up-armored Humvees and body armor

- ◆ A 3.5% military pay raise and increased funding for military housing allowance

- ◆ An additional \$463 million for Black Hawk and Chinook helicopters

◆ \$3.6 billion for 24 F/A-22 fighters

◆ \$2.7 billion for 15 C-17 aircraft

◆ \$4.4 billion for the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) (an increase of \$116 million over 2004 levels)

The House Republican Leadership included language in the defense bill that would allow for the national debt limit to be increased for the third time in three years. In 2003, Congress enacted the largest debt limit increase in history -- nearly \$1 trillion. In 2002, they raised the debt limit by \$450 billion. This year, an additional \$690 billion increase is needed to keep the federal government solvent. Larson voted in favor of a motion that would allow this provision to be removed. The motion failed, and the language to raise the debt ceiling remained in the bill.

◆By inserting this incredibly controversial language in the defense appropriations bill, the Republican Leadership is again politicizing support for our troops and our military,◆ said Larson. ◆They have included this provisions alongside funding for national defense programs, literally daring members to vote against military pay increases and body armor for the troops in the field. Voting for this much-needed bill now also means a vote to increase the debt limit after years of financial mismanagement at the hands of the Majority. This is simply a clever ploy to avoid an up or down vote in the House on increasing the debt limit, which would remind Americans of our dismal financial situation. The GOP Leadership has driven the nation deep into the red with a lack fiscal responsibility and now they are attempting to use this back door route to again add hundreds of billions more in public debt on the backs of our troops.◆

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