

Association of the United States Army

Voice for the Army—Support for the Soldier



America's Army: The Strength of the Nation

AUSA + 1st Session, 110th Congress = Some Good News, But...

As the guardians of our nation's freedom, American Soldiers are the strength of the nation. After more than six years of war, our Soldiers have proven it takes boots on the ground to achieve success on today's battlefields, just as American Soldiers have shown for more than 230 years. In an era of persistent conflict, well-equipped and well-trained Soldiers are vital to the protection and promotion of our national security.

In its 1st Session, the 110th Congress made some progress toward allocating much-needed resources to the Army. Through the use of supplemental appropriations as well as authorizations and appropriations to the base budget, Congress provided resources for continuing current operations worldwide, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, and for resetting the force; reduced the pay gap between military and private sector pay; substantially increased the death gratuity for Department of the Army civilians; blocked Department of Defense efforts to offset rising health care costs on the backs of retirees; and took steps to ensure that military children receive high-quality education.

However, there is more to be done. By only delaying increases in TRICARE fees, cost shares and pharmaceutical costs for retirees, Congress merely postponed making the necessary decisions to ensure affordable health care for those who, even after retirement, continue to serve as key influencers helping to encourage and sustain the nation's All-Volunteer Force. Moreover, reducing the required funds for the Future Combat Systems, the Army's major modernization program, will delay insertion of technological advances into the current force and escalate program costs.

If the nation wants fully manned, mission ready land forces, resources must follow. All AUSA members must work together to ensure funding of initiatives to ensure Soldiers and their families have a quality of life commensurate with those they serve and to secure resources that will restore balance, provide depth to Army capabilities and build capacity for the future.

Each member of AUSA is a Torchbearer, carrying this message to our elected representatives and the American public. Your voice matters! Help keep our Army Strong.

Here are some of the major objectives for the last legislative session:

AUSA and others spoke out for:

- Increasing active Army endstrength to 700,000.
- Closing the pay gap between Soldiers and the private sector and providing pay increase parity for Department of the Army civilians.
- Repealing the law that reduces military survivor benefit (SBP) annuities by the amount of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments.
- Not increasing TRICARE fees/ deductibles.
- Funding reserve component endstrength at 358,000 for Army National Guard and 206,000 for Army Reserve.
- Increasing the death gratuity payment for federal civilians to \$100,000.

Congress responded by:

- Temporarily authorizing active Army endstrength up to 525,400 and to 547,400 between 2008 and 2010 but without base budget funding.
- Decreasing the current pay gap by approving a January 2008 pay raise of 3.5 percent for military personnel and providing pay increase parity for Department of the Army civilians.
- Authorizing a special payment of \$50/month to survivors affected by the SBP/DIC offset beginning 1 October 2008 and increasing by \$10/month for five years.
- Barring the Defense Department from increasing any TRICARE Prime or Standard Fees, pharmacy co-pays or TRICARE Reserve Select premiums, but only through 30 September 2008.
- Authorizing and funding Army National Guard endstrength at 351,300 and Army Reserve endstrength at 205,000.
- Increasing the death gratuity for federal civilians to \$100,000.

People