

## Senator Harry Reid

### Special Report

# Defense

### Supporting Our Military

The American people can take pride in their Armed Forces. They are unequalled in strength, unrivaled in professionalism, and unprecedented in success. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, it is my obligation to ensure that these courageous men and women have the resources and support that they need to defend our nation. As our troops in Iraq, Afghanistan and in the global war on terror, I have fought for the following initiatives for them:

### Additional funding for our military in Iraq and Afghanistan

In addition to the \$460 billion defense spending bill the Senate passed, I voted for each of the Iraq and Afghanistan Supplemental Appropriations bills, which most recently allocated some \$90 billion directly for our troops in the field. We must provide our military with the funding it needs to continue protecting our freedom.

### Increasing Military Pay

Our troops deserve a decent wage for their demanding work. That is why I supported the fiscal year 2004 (FY04) National Defense Authorization Act, which included an average 4.15 percent pay raise for active troops. This legislation also increased Imminent Danger Pay (formerly known as "combat pay") from \$150 to \$225 a month and Family Separation Allowance from \$100 to \$250 a month, effective through December 2004. I also strongly supported the increases in military pay and allowances in the FY05 defense spending bills.

### Fighting for our Reserve and National Guard

I recently delivered over \$21 million in funding to the Nevada National Guard for military construction projects. I am committed to assuring that our National Guard and Reserves forces have the tools they need to contribute to our nation's military. I have also supported efforts to expand TRICARE, the military health care coverage, to members of ready reserves. I also support efforts to reduce the retirement age for members of the National Guard and Reserves. National Guard and Reserve forces are critical to our nation's defense.

### Easing the Travel Burden (R&R flights home)

In November of 2003, I joined my colleagues in appropriating \$55 million to fund travel home for active and reserve troops during their two-week Rest and Recuperation Leave (R&R). Under the previous law, soldiers were required to pay for their transportation on these leaves. This funding will help ease the travel burden for our troops.

### Fixing the Military Hospital Reimbursement Policy

The previous Military Hospital Reimbursement Policy required military personnel wounded in battle to reimburse the government for their hospital food costs, at a rate of \$8.10 per day. My legislation, adopted as part of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill in November of 2003, permanently ended the military hospital food reimbursement policy.

### Supporting Military Families

With our troops deployed abroad protecting our freedom, we must also address the needs and concerns that their families are struggling with on the home front. Among some of my efforts to take care of military families are:

### Tax Relief

I fought for passage of the Military Family Tax Relief Act, which features tax breaks for members of the military and their families. Military and Foreign Service, for example, personnel can now count the years spent overseas toward the time they must live in a home in order to avoid taxation on any profit from its sale. Additionally, National Guard and military reservists can deduct overnight travel expenses related to military service from their taxes.

### TRICARE coverage

In addition to my efforts to expand the TRICARE system to the National Guard and Reserves, I am also a supporter of expanding these benefits to their families. For this reason, I have cosponsored legislation that would allow all National Guard and Reserve members and their families to receive TRICARE.

### Free postage for packages to troops

Receiving packages from loved ones at home helps to keep the morale of our troops high. To this end, I am a supporter the Providing Our Support to Troops (POST) Act, which would permit individuals to send packages to Army Post Offices and Fleet Post Offices in hostile environments free of charge. I have also written the Postmaster General and

the Secretary of Defense requesting that they implement a postage-free policy for families with loved ones in combat zones.

### **Nevada Defense Projects**

Nevada 's military bases and other defense facilities play an important role in protecting this country and I am committed to ensuring they have the best equipment and facilities they need to train our Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen. In the Fiscal Year 2005 Defense Appropriations bill, I obtained more than \$100 million for Nevada 's military bases and rapidly growing defense industry. This money will help our state continue to expand and develop the role of safeguarding our nation. Specific funding for Nevada 's projects include:

### **\$8 million to Mask High Density Electronics:**

A Henderson-based company is developing this project to help the military protect its computers, weapons systems, and troops from enemy detection. The high-tech system will mask the heat signals produced by electronics, so they won't be visible to enemy satellites or radar systems.

### **\$7 million for a Computer Automated Virtual Environment facility, or CAVE:**

The Desert Research Institute is developing this virtual reality facility in Reno. CAVE uses computer technology to create three-dimensional simulations of other terrains. Military personnel can practice maneuvers in realistic settings before they deploy to combat locations. For instance, pilots can practice landing a helicopter in a sandstorm in the virtual-reality Iraqi desert, without risking their own safety or their helicopters. They could then deploy to Iraq or elsewhere in the Middle East

with a better idea of what to expect.

### **\$2 million for Battle Field Blood Transfusion Technology:**

A group of Nevada researchers is developing this system to make blood transfusions possible on the battlefield. Donated blood must be stored at 34 degrees Fahrenheit, but it can't be transplanted into a human body until it's close to 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit or it will cause hypothermia and shock. Hospitals use electric-powered equipment to heat blood for transfusions, but military medics often have to work in locations with no electricity. The Nevada team is developing battery-powered equipment to heat blood, which could make transfusions available to wounded troops on the front lines. The technology could also help civilian hospitals during blackouts or natural disasters when power supplies are interrupted.

The bill also includes:

\$3 million in additional funding for the Nevada National Guard counter-drug program

\$6 million for new research initiatives at the Hawthorne Army Depot

\$2 million to support Nevada medical researchers working to improve the visual capabilities of air combat pilots

\$7 million for the next generation of anti-terrorism communications and surveillance technology being developed in Nevada

\$4 million for high-powered military flashlights made in Nevada.

The Department of Defense Appropriations bill will now go to a Senate/House Conference Committee.