

Key Congressional Committees Boost Funds to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism

House and Senate Appropriators Fund 27% Increase in Nonproliferation Programs

WASHINGTON, July 23 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Two key Congressional committees this week gave a big boost to the administration's efforts to prevent nuclear materials from falling into the hands of violent extremist groups. Both committees fully funded the administration's request for a 27 percent increase for two Energy Department programs to secure vulnerable nuclear materials in other countries.

"The nuclear nonproliferation initiatives of the Obama administration have enjoyed strong bipartisan support," explains David Culp, a lobbyist for the Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quakers). "These significant budget increases reflect the concern of many members of Congress in securing bomb-grade nuclear material internationally. They also are a result of a concerted lobbying effort by the Energy Department, Vice President Biden, and Undersecretary of State Ellen Tauscher."

The House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee voted July 15 to fully fund the administration's request for these funds. Its Senate counterpart subcommittee followed suit on July 20, with the full Senate Appropriations Committee adopting the increase on July 22.

The Bush 43 administration began the Global Threat Reduction Initiative program in 2004 and they expanded the International Nuclear Material Protection and Cooperation program. The two Bush programs enjoyed strong support from Sen. Dick Lugar (IN), one of Obama's foreign policy mentors. Obama developed the idea of accelerating the "loose nukes" programs on the campaign trail and included the funding increases in his budget this year.

President Obama had pledged during his campaign to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials worldwide within four years. The administration persuaded 46 other countries to ratify that goal at an international Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in April.

The acting chairman of the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, Rep. Ed Pastor (AZ), said at its bill-drafting session, "The Global Threat Reduction Initiative, along with the International Nuclear Material Protection and Cooperation, will lead the efforts to secure fissile material in four years; the bill provides \$1.1 billion, the same as the request and \$243 million above 2010, for this important effort." Pastor said at the June 15 markup that he was regularly getting phone calls from Vice President Joe Biden asking about the funding.

The ranking member of the House subcommittee, Rodney Frelinghuysen (NJ), also voiced his support for the nonproliferation increases in the subcommittee markup.

Senate subcommittee chairman Byron Dorgan (ND) stated in his report on the bill, "The Committee supports NNSA's goal of securing all vulnerable nuclear material within 4 years. Securing nuclear materials at the sites and facilities where they are located is the best defense against nuclear terrorism." NNSA is the National Nuclear Security Agency.

The full House Appropriations Committee has not yet scheduled the bill for final approval, but may take it up the week of July 26. A House-Senate conference committee will hammer out the differences in the two bills, probably as part of a larger, year-end "omnibus" appropriations bill in a lame-duck session of Congress in November and December.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation, the oldest registered religious lobby in Washington, is a non-partisan Quaker lobby in the public interest. FCNL works with a nationwide network of tens of thousands of people from every state in the U.S. to advocate for social and economic justice, peace, and good government. For more information: www.fcnl.org

SOURCE: Friends Committee on National Legislation