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# LIEBERMAN SAYS FIRST RESPONDERS NEED MORE SUPPORT

WASHINGTON – Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Ranking Member Joe Lieberman, D-CT, upon completion of the Homeland Security Appropriations Conference Report, complained Monday that first responders are being denied the funding necessary to carry out their responsibilities to respond to a potential disaster.

“First responders risk their lives to keep the rest of us safe and they should be provided with the equipment and training they need to perform their jobs safely and effectively,” Lieberman said. “Our communities depend upon them. The response problems recently exposed by Hurricane Katrina make this decision appear very questionable. We should be beefing up our support for all of our response partners rather than leaving them in a position of having to do more with less.” Instead, the conference report goes along with Administration calls to cut funding for vital first responder programs. The conference report cuts the core homeland security first responder grants programs 28% from the FY05 appropriations, from \$2.385 billion to \$1.715 billion. The State Homeland Security Grants Program – the basic program that provides grants for equipment and training for first responders in all states- has been slashed 50%, from \$1.1 billion to \$550 million. Lieberman and Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), the Chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, offered S. 21, the Homeland Security Grant Enhancement Act of 2005, which would have authorized \$2.925 billion for the three core first responder grant programs, 70% more than the total approved in conference. This bill was adopted by the Senate as an amendment to the Homeland Security appropriations bill, however it was not included in the conference report. Lieberman did, however, express

satisfaction that conferees moved in the right direction on funding for rail and transit security and the Coast Guard. The conference report did provide \$933 million for the coast Guard's critical Deepwater fleet modernization program. Although considerably less than Lieberman has advocated for this program, this funding nevertheless does represent an increase for the Deepwater program over last year. Conferees also agreed to maintain an independent research and development program within the Coast Guard, rather than folding these activities into the Department's Science and Technology Directorate. The Coast Guard received \$17.75 million for research and development at its Connecticut center, which maintains the Department's FY05 funding levels for this program. Also included in the report were \$150 million for rail and transit security grants, which equals last year's total, and reverses a \$50 million cut passed in the Senate version. Earlier this year Collins and Lieberman wrote a letter to their colleagues on the Appropriations committee requesting a minimum funding level of \$150 million. "We must listen to the security experts who tell us that this terrorist threat is one we must live with – and defend against – at home and abroad for the indefinite future," Lieberman said. "And we must listen to the experts who say we should match the threat – at home and abroad – with the resources necessary to vanquish it."