

THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2006

LIEBERMAN SAYS HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT UNDER FUNDS FIRST RESPONDERS

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Ranking Member Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., Thursday voted in favor of the FY2007 Homeland Security Appropriations Act, which included an amendment offered by himself and Chairman Susan Collins, R-Me., to reinvent FEMA and because of an amendment by Senator Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., to advance chemical security regulations. The measure still vastly under funds a variety of homeland security needs, including rail and transit security and first responder needs, Lieberman said.

“This bill has elements that will improve our homeland security, but without adequate funding, our nation’s homeland security needs cannot properly be met,” said Lieberman. “While Senate appropriators greatly improved upon the President’s budget proposal for homeland security, this year’s Homeland Security Appropriations Act still falls far short of sufficient funding for a variety of needs. Funding for first responders, whose crucial role was dramatically seen in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, was cut for the third straight year. However, I am heartened by the additional funds that were appropriated for our port security and hope that they will be retained in conference with the House.”

Two key provisions of this bill will improve our security and our disaster response capabilities, Lieberman said. The Byrd amendment, which Lieberman cosponsored, will permit the Department of Homeland Security to establish regulations to help secure the chemical facilities most at risk of terrorist attack.

Last month, the Senate Committee unanimously approved the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006, authored by Collins and Lieberman. This act has not yet been brought to the floor for consideration.

Also, the 87-11 approval of the Collins-Lieberman amendment to remake FEMA into a truly national emergency management system will provide the authority, capabilities, and resources emergency officials need to ensure more effective and coordinated response to future disasters.