

Pleasanton Patch

*May 26, 2011*

The House of Representatives today passed a bipartisan amendment offered by Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, that will protect East Bay Stand Down from devastating funding cuts, according to a press release.

East Bay Stand Down is a biennial event held in Pleasanton that provides services to veterans, many of whom are homeless.

The event, which takes place over a series of days at the Alameda County Fairgrounds, connects veterans to medical, dental, mental health, and employment services, among others.

“East Bay Stand Down is about walking the walk – and not just talking the talk – when it comes to helping veterans,” Rep. McNerney said in a statement.

“This event offers practical services, such as medical care and mental health services, to veterans who are in need.”

Many key services offered at East Bay Stand Down are provided by members of the Army and Navy Reserves. At past Stand Down events, for example, members of the Army and Navy Reserves offered medical care and dental, optometry and mental health services to hundreds of veterans.

McNerney said funding that makes it possible for members of the Reserves to offer these services came under threat this week during debate on H.R. 1540, the National Defense Authorization Act.

He said the Republican Majority put forward a plan to cut funding for innovative readiness training (IRT) projects by 50%. IRT is the initiative that enables members of the Reserves to participate in East Bay Stand Down and other projects. Rep. McNerney's amendment, which passed with bipartisan support, restores funding for IRT projects to current levels, protecting East Bay Stand Down and dozens of other projects across the country from devastating cuts.

"Cutting funding that East Bay Stand Down and other projects depend on is unacceptable," said Rep. McNerney. "That's why I offered an amendment, passed with bipartisan support, to restore this funding to current levels. Providing basic services to men and women who have served our country and are now homeless is simply the right thing to do."

A second amendment offered by Rep. McNerney encourages the Secretary of Defense to work with the newly created Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to ensure that coordinated financial counseling is available for members of the Armed Forces and their families.

Both amendments offered by Rep. McNerney passed the House by voice vote. The amendment to protect East Bay Stand Down and similar programs was cosponsored by Reps. Nick Rahall, D-West Virginia, and Don Young, R-Alaska.