May 20, 2010

Washington, D.C. – Provisions championed by Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11) to increase pay for the men and women serving our country in combat zones passed the House Armed Services Committee yesterday with bipartisan and unanimous support as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). According to estimates made by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, these increases will benefit approximately 400,000 service members and their families per month.

During a trip to Afghanistan last year, Congressman McNerney met with soldiers who asked him to work to increase pay for troops. Many men and women in uniform haven't seen an increase in military specialty pay in years. Upon his return, Congressman McNerney introduced H.R. 4440, the COMBAT Act, legislation that would increase pay for service members.

"Last year I traveled to Afghanistan as part of a bipartisan congressional delegation to see first-hand the situation on the ground and visit with our service members," said Rep. McNerney. "Many of the men and women I spoke with shared the struggle they face providing for their families while away from home and in the midst of grueling conditions."

"Our men and women in uniform are making tremendous sacrifices for our country and they need our support back home," continued Rep. McNerney. "Raising pay for our troops in harm's way is simply the right thing to do."

After introducing the COMBAT Act to increase pay for the troops, Congressman McNerney worked closely with Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Ike Skelton to incorporate key provisions of the COMBAT Act into the NDAA. Through direct personal advocacy with the House Armed Services Committee, rallying support among veterans and military service organizations, and a formal request made via letter to the Chairman, Congressman McNerney successfully led the charge to increase certain types of military pay.

Chairman Skelton recognized Congressman McNerney for his leadership in championing a pay increase for the troops with the following words.

“At Congressman McNerney’s urging, the House Armed Services Committee included provisions in the defense authorization bill to increase the maximum amount of hostile fire and imminent danger pay for the first time since 2004 and increase family separation allowance for our service members whose deployment or temporary duty requires them to live away from their families,” said Chairman Skelton. “I want to thank Congressman McNerney for his efforts to make sure our troops and their loved ones receive the first class benefits that they deserve.”

Thanks to Congressman McNerney’s efforts, the House Armed Services Committee passed increases in pay for the troops in the following categories: Hostile Fire Pay (HFP), Imminent Danger Pay (IDP), and Family Separation Allowance (FSA), all of which were included in Congressman McNerney’s legislation.

Hostile Fire Pay, currently set at $225 per month, is for service members exposed to hostile fire or explosion of hostile mines. Imminent Danger Pay, also set at $225 per month, is for service members serving in specifically designated places deemed to pose a threat of physical harm or imminent danger due to insurrection, war, or terrorism. Family Separation Allowance, currently set at $250 per month, is a partial reimbursement for service members involuntarily separated from their dependents and is intended to provide for extra expenses that result from such a separation. Under the proposal currently under consideration, both HFP and IDP would increase to $260 per month and FSA would increase to $285 per month.

The House of Representatives is next expected to take up consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), including the provisions championed by Congressman McNerney.