
U.S. Congressman Jim Cooper

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COOPER BILL TO GIVE NATIONAL GUARD & RESERVES NEEDED EQUIPMENT

WASHINGTON—U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper introduced legislation today urging the Department of Defense and Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to provide needed equipment to National Guard and Reserve forces currently serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Balkans. Cooper is a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

“We are relying on the brave men and women of the National Guard and the Reserves to put their lives on the line every day,” Cooper said. “Yet too often, we are asking them to go into harm’s way without the basic equipment they urgently need. For too long, Guard and Reserve troops have been given second-hand equipment discarded by active duty military. That has to stop. They deserve the best equipment we have.”

“We must live up to our commitment to give our Guard and Reserve forces the proper equipment to do their job and come home safely,” Cooper said. “Anything less is unacceptable.”

More than 2,000 Tennessee Guard and Reserve members are currently serving alongside active duty military in Iraq, Afghanistan and throughout the world.

Major General Gus L. Hargett, Jr., The Adjutant General of the Tennessee National Guard, said “All soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines regardless of components are entitled to the same survivability and war fighting equipment as their active duty counterparts. We should not differentiate between these individuals who have all made a commitment volunteering to serve our country and put themselves in harm’s way for the benefit of us all.”

Over 28,000 National Guard and Reserve personnel are currently deployed in Iraq, making up more than a quarter of the American troops there. Just yesterday, an additional 15,000 Guard and Reserve troops were ordered to prepare for a possible yearlong tour of duty in Iraq or Kuwait, bringing the total number of Guard and Reserve troops who have been alerted for possible service in the Persian Gulf region early next year to 58,000.

More than 60 Guard and Reserve members have died and dozens more have been seriously injured in the war in Iraq.

The bill was cosponsored by 49 members of the House of Representatives, including Rep. Lincoln Davis. Other original sponsors of the bill include Rep. Ellen Tauscher, Rep. George Miller and Rep. Nancy Pelosi, all of California, and Rep. Ike Skelton of Missouri.

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