

## Senate votes for \$25 billion in emergency Iraq funds

By David Hess, [CongressDaily](#)

The Bush administration won a crucial Senate vote Wednesday on the fiscal 2005 defense authorization bill.

Although President Bush had to concede some flexibility in spending extra money for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, he obtained the authority for general control over \$25 billion in an emergency contingency fund to pay for the burgeoning cost of the conflicts. But he must notify Congress beforehand that he plans to dip into the till and that he spends the money for war-fighting purposes.

The Defense Department initially asked for a free hand in spending the additional billions. The vote to give Bush the money was approved without a dissenting vote, 95-0.

Senate Appropriations ranking member Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., was one of the first to object to giving the Pentagon unrestricted authority to spend the money.

But he said after the vote he was satisfied with a compromise that requires \$22.5 billion to be directed to specific Defense Department accounts and only \$2.5 billion to be spent at the Pentagon's discretion.

"Giving the Defense Department a 10 percent margin of error in calculating where it will need these funds provides more than adequate flexibility," said Byrd. "The Senate should build on its work here to ensure that the appropriations bill includes similar provisions that preserve the power of the purse that resides with Congress."

Before that vote, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John Warner, R-Va., reminded his colleagues the \$25 billion was just the first installment, and the administration would be coming back to Congress early next year for another emergency supplemental.

The size of that legislation has not yet been calculated, but defense specialists on Capitol Hill surmise it will range between \$15 billion and \$25 billion.

After the vote, an Office of Management and Budget spokesman said: "We appreciate the chairman's efforts. This amendment strikes a good balance between Congress' legitimate oversight responsibility and the flexibility we need to make sure our commanders in the field have what they need when they need it."

The House's version of the defense authorization bill already contains the additional money for combat operations.

Darren Goode contributed to this report.

