

Called on House Leadership to Pull Funding From Defense Bill

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep Harry Mitchell today applauded the news that Congress has abandoned plans for \$550 million for new luxury Gulfstream jets used by lawmakers and senior government officials. Last week Mitchell wrote House Speaker Nancy Pelosi urging that the funding be pulled.

"I believe that fiscal discipline begins at home, and if we expect other parts of the federal government to control spending, Congress need to control its own," Mitchell said. "I am also particularly concerned about allegations in recent press reports that a substantial portion of this funding may have been requested via an earmark request for a for-profit company which wasn't outlined in the bill."

The 2010 Defense appropriations bill, which primarily funds American troops during a time of war passed in July by an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 400 - 30.

The U.S. Air Force had requested funding for one Gulfstream 550 jet as part of an ongoing upgrade of its passenger air service. However, the House Appropriations Committee, at its own initiative, added another \$132 million for two more jets to the Fiscal Year 2010 Defense Appropriations bill. The committee specified that they be assigned to the D.C.-area units that carry Members of Congress, military brass and top government officials. Additional reports also suggest that the funding was requested as an earmark yet not designated as such in the bill. [Source: [Roll Call](#) , August 5, 2009]

House leaders have announced a decision to reverse the move following opposition from lawmakers, such as Mitchell, and the Department of Defense. Now the bill will only include the original funding request submitted by Defense officials. [Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) , August 11, 2009]

Below is the text of Congressman Mitchell's Letter to Speaker Pelosi:

August 6, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building, H-232
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

As the FY2010 Defense Appropriations Act goes to conference, I urge you to strip \$132 million in funding for two Gulfstream 550 jets that could potentially be used for travel by Members of Congress.

As you know, I have long advocated against increases in spending for members of Congress. Since joining Congress, I have offered legislation every year to block the automatic pay raise for Members of Congress. When salaries have increased over my objection, I have donated my pay raises to charity.

More recently, I voted against the FY2010 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act because it included a 6 percent increase for Congressional operations.

I believe that fiscal discipline begins at home, and spending more on Congress sends the wrong message. If we expect other parts of the federal government to control spending, we in Congress need to control our own.

I am also particularly concerned about allegations in recent press reports that a substantial portion of this funding may have been requested via an earmark request. With your leadership, the House has enacted major earmark reforms to bring greater transparency and accountability. I support these reforms, and encourage adherence to them.

Sincerely,

Harry E. Mitchell