

War Profiteers

The president asked Congress last week to authorize new funding for the war in Iraq, which was not paid for in the wasteful budget recently passed in the House of Representatives. You might assume that Congress would simply approve legislation that pays for military supplies and hardware, troop wages, ammunition, fuel, food, and the like. In other words, the bread and butter items that our troops need to prosecute the war in Iraq.

But nothing is simple in Washington. Congress could not resist the opportunity to put its hands in taxpayers' pockets by adding *20 billion dollars* in completely unrelated spending to the final bill. In essence, Congress is so addicted to spending that it will use any opportunity, even a war, to spend money for every conceivable reason- however unrelated to the war in Iraq.

We must understand that America is in a financial crisis. Tax revenues are down due to the faltering economy, but congressional spending has exploded by more than 22% in just two years. As a result, annual deficits have risen rapidly, and the national debt now approaches 6.5 trillion dollars. Almost all of this new spending has been completely unrelated to homeland defense or national security concerns. The same old failed domestic agencies and special-interest pork programs have received the bulk of the dollars. While Congress should fund constitutional federal functions like national defense, our very solvency as a nation is being threatened by unconstitutional spending.

Here are some examples of what ended up in the "war funding" bill:

- \$3.2 billion for an airline bailout-even though the airlines always seem to be troubled and always feel they deserve tax money. If we bail out the airlines, why not the hotels, restaurants, and rental car agencies that have been affected by 9-11 and the war in Iraq? Why not every industry that's suffering?;
- \$125 million for congressional security, to make sure members are safe even if the country is not;
- \$11 million for salaries and expenses for the House of Representatives, who already approved a pay raise for themselves last Fall;
- \$250 million for Department of Agriculture grants;
- \$69 million for something called the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust;
- \$5.5 million for the Library of Congress;
- \$6.8 million for the Congressional Research Service and General Accounting Office;
- \$100,000 for the U.S. Court of International Trade.

The bill also includes \$8 billion in foreign aid, which is especially egregious given the state of the

American economy. How can we ask taxpayers to send billions abroad with things so tough for many here at home?

The \$ 8 billion includes:

- \$1 billion in "economic assistance" for Turkey, even though they refused to let America use its bases to stage our assault on Iraq and have only grudgingly allowed use of its airspace;
- \$700 million for Jordan;
- \$500 million for Egypt;
- \$127 million for Afghanistan;
- \$1 billion in for Israel;
- \$175 million for Pakistan;
- \$170 million to train the "Afghan National Army";

and the list goes on and on. All of this is of course in addition to the standard foreign aid we send these nations and many others every year.

These are just some examples of how Congress takes every possible opportunity to spend your money, even when it should be focused on the war in Iraq. Was it really too much to ask for a clean bill to fund the president's request, a bill unencumbered by pork handouts and useless foreign aid? Apparently not even war can prevent Congress from shamelessly sticking its hands in your pockets while cloaking itself in "support the troops" rhetoric.