

Senate Approves \$81.26 Billion in a Military Emergency Bill - Correction Appended

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 **Correction Appended**

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Body

The Senate on Thursday unanimously approved its version of an \$81.26 billion supplemental emergency military spending bill, setting the stage for a tug of war over immigration policy, death benefits for military families, the price of a new embassy in Baghdad and other provisions in reconciling the House and Senate versions of the bill.

The final bill is likely to have a major impact on the contentious subjects of United States policy on immigration and border security. The House version incorporated provisions blocking states from issuing standard driver's licenses to illegal immigrants, making it harder for immigrants to win asylum, and circumventing environmental rules to build a barrier along the border with Mexico near San Diego.

But after the House acted on immigration, the Senate moved in the opposite direction, expanding the number of foreigners whom employers could hire as temporary seasonal workers. A dozen senators from both parties wrote a letter to Senator Bill Frist of Tennessee, the majority leader, urging him to fight the House asylum provisions in the conference as a potential impediment to refugees from human rights violations abroad. "I think the president is going to have some voice too on this," said Senator Sam Brownback, Republican of Kansas and one of the signers of the letter.

The White House, however, has expressed support for the driver's license restrictions, making it more likely that they will remain in the final bill. Many advocates of other immigration policy changes, such as the president's proposed foreign guest-worker program, call enacting the driver's license requirement a necessary concession to House conservatives.

On Wednesday and Thursday, the Senate also added two amendments to pay for more border patrol agents, taking \$400 million from the budget of the State Department and \$147 million from international peacekeeping accounts, respectively.

The Senate also incorporated two slight rebuffs to President Bush on Iraq. On Monday, the Senate voted 61 to 31 to adopt an amendment proposed by Senator Robert C. Byrd, Democrat of West Virginia, urging the president to forecast the costs of the United States military involvement and to incorporate them in regular military spending bills instead of later supplemental bills.

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On Wednesday, **Senate** Republicans incorporated without a vote an amendment sponsored by Senators Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, and Richard J. Durbin, Democrat of Illinois, requiring the administration to report to Congress every three months on progress toward training Iraqi security forces and about the expected requirements for troops in Iraq. "The administration owes it to our troops and the American people to be more candid about real progress in training Iraqi security forces," Mr. Kennedy said.

The **Senate's \$81.26 billion bill** is only slightly lower than the \$82 **billion** sought by the president and the \$81.4 **billion approved** by the House. But there are thorny differences the conference will need to resolve.

On the emotional subject of death benefits for the family of **military** personnel, the **Senate** included an amendment to raise the benefits to \$500,000 from \$12,420 for families of those killed while on duty. The House version raises benefits only for families of those killed in combat.

The **Senate** also included \$549 million that the administration had requested for the construction of an embassy in Baghdad. The House declined to provide the money.

Another area of dispute concerns aid to Palestinians. Current law requires the president to make periodic reports to Congress about how such aid is spent. The president's supplemental budget proposed eliminating that requirement, but instead the House blocked any direct aid at all, allowing only contributions to third parties. The **Senate** took a middle path retaining the current laws.

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Correction

An article on Friday about the **Senate's** passage of an **\$81.26 billion** supplementary **bill** for **emergency military** spending and a chart comparing the **Senate** and House versions misstated the amount earmarked for the construction of an embassy in Baghdad. It is \$592 million, not \$549 million.

Correction-Date: April 25, 2005

Graphic

Chart: "Some Differences on War Spending **Bills**" Some main differences in versions of the supplemental spending **bill** for the 2005 fiscal year as passed by the House and **Senate**: OVERALL SPENDING House \$81.4 **billion**

\$76.8 **billion** for the military Senate version About \$81.3 **billion**

\$74.8 **billion** for the military EMBASSY IN BAGHDAD House version: No provision. **Senate** version: Includes \$549 million for construction. **MILITARY** DEATH BENEFITS House version: Increases financial benefits for bereaved families if a death was combat-related. **Senate** version: Increases the benefits for families whether the death was combat-related or not. IMMIGRATION PROVISIONS House version Denies driver's licenses to illegal immigrants and allow a fence along the California-Mexico border, among other provisions. **Senate** version Expands the number of foreigners employers could hire as temporary seasonal workers. AIRCRAFT CARRIERS House version: No provision. **Senate** version: Requires that the Navy maintain its fleet of 12 aircraft carriers. The Pentagon had proposed eliminating one. (Sources by **Senate** Appropriations Committee)

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