

WASHINGTON, DC - House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) joined Members of the Washington Metro Area Delegation at a press conference this afternoon to discuss how it is unnecessary for the Department of Defense to issue furlough notices to 100,000 federal employees. Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:

“Let me say right at the top: Department of Defense workers are not going to be furloughed. That is not going to happen.

“Yet, the Department of Defense apparently intends to move forward with notifying civilian defense employees of possible furloughs as soon as this week.

“Here’s the reality: On Monday, the non-partisan Congressional Research Service issued a report on Extending Army Operations in Advance of a Supplemental War Appropriation, and found that the Department of Defense could continue current operations on current DoD funds until March 2008.

“This action – unnecessarily upsetting countless families throughout the region and across the country during the holiday season - is quite simply a political tactic by the Administration to pressure Congress to continue writing blank checks for its failing Iraq policy.

“As CRS indicates, the Department of Defense currently has tools at its disposal to move funds – a common practice employed by the Department in recent years.

“Indeed, most recently, the Department used its General Transfer Authority in FY07 to shift funds while it awaited funds that the previous Republican-led Congress neglected to provide.

“According to the CRS Report: ‘In the absence of a bridge fund, the Defense Department may be able to extend Army and Marine Corps operations beyond February or March, either by adding money from other sources to Operations and Maintenance accounts or by slowing the pace at which the services are obligating funds.’

“Despite this, this Administration has chosen to play politics and stoke the fears of civilian employees, rather than meeting with Members of Congress to find ways to address this matter. Like the ill-conceived National Security Personnel System, this is simply one more example of this Administration’s low regard for our federal civilian workforce.

“Defense employees work hard every day to keep America safe and provide critical support to our soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world. President Bush should stop using these dedicated and valued workers as political pawns in an attempt to get Congress to write a blank check for Iraq.

“I urge the President and his advisors: abandon the political theater and work with us to ensure

that defense employees are able to continue the vital work they do on behalf of the nation.”

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