

**WASHINGTON, DC** - Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) released the following statement today after the House passed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012:

"Today, the House passed the FY12 Defense Authorization bill, which gives our Armed Forces the resources they need to keep our country safe, and also supports our military families. I voted for this legislation. Nevertheless, I am deeply concerned about several provisions attached to this bill by Republicans, none of which will make our nation safer.

"First, Republicans attached an amendment aiming to reopen the issue of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' repeal, which the President signed into law last December. While last year's legislation required the President, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to certify that repeal would not harm readiness, this amendment requires a separate certification from each of the Service Chiefs. This requirement flies in the face of longstanding military policy that establishes the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs as the president's top military adviser--as well as the overwhelming opinion of the American public and military, who support repeal. It also threatens to continue to deprive our nation of the dedicated and much-needed service of gay and lesbian troops. Further, it's unnecessary-- Secretary Gates has made clear he intends to take the Service Chiefs' views into consideration before certifying, and the Service Chiefs themselves have testified multiple times that they do not believe it is necessary to make the certification themselves.

"Second, this bill contains an overly broad Authorization for the Use of Military Force. This provision dramatically expands the President's powers to use military force, without clearly specifying an enemy, place, or timeframe to constrain those powers. As the Administration has made clear, this language risks creating great legal confusion. Rather than burying this provision inside a 900-page bill, I believe an issue as serious as this deserves much more attention -- including hearings and bipartisan discussions on whether and how the AUMF should be re-written.

"Third, this bill includes misguided Republican language on detainees, which prohibits their transfer from Guantanamo for any purpose, including trial in Federal court. These trials have proved one of our best resources for bringing terrorists to justice; since the Bush administration, over 400 people have been convicted in Federal court of terrorism-related crimes, including some of the worst of the worst. By depriving us of this option, this language takes away one of the tools in our toolbox in the fight against terrorists. I believe we should not limit the

Administration's ability to bring terrorists to justice.

"In addition, the House voted on an amendment, which I supported, designed to require the President to provide information to Congress on plans to transfer lead security responsibility to the Afghans. While this amendment did not pass, I am encouraged that it received strong support from both parties--a positive sign that more Members of Congress are reflecting on what we can do to make our war against terrorists more effective."