

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (D-Mo.) delivered the statement below during House consideration of H.R. 5013, the IMPROVE Acquisition Act of 2010, bipartisan legislation to overhaul defense acquisition spending, potentially saving billions of taxpayer dollars and expediting the process to get the necessary equipment to our warfighters.

"I rise in strong support of H.R. 5013, the IMPROVE Acquisition Act of 2010. For many years, we've witnessed waste in the Department of Defense's acquisition system spiral out of control, placing a heavy burden on both American taxpayers and on our men and women in uniform. Less frequently, but still far too often, fraud and abuse creep into the system as well, as sadly happened so extensively in Iraq. Our troops rely on the acquisition system to buy the equipment they need to keep them safe on the battlefield and protect our country. When that system breaks down, they suffer.

"In recent years, I and many of my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee became increasingly concerned that this flawed defense acquisition system was not responsive enough to today's mission needs, not rigorous enough in protecting the tax dollars of millions of families who are struggling financially, and not disciplined enough in the acquisition of weapons systems for tomorrow's wars.

"We took action. Last year, we worked with the Senate to enact legislation to reform weapons system acquisition. However, weapon systems make up only a small piece of our defense acquisition spending. That bill was a great launching pad for reform, but it was just the beginning.

"In the House, we continued the effort by creating the Panel on Defense Acquisition Reform, ably led by Congressmen Rob Andrews and Mike Conaway, to carry out a comprehensive review of the current system and to identify what steps we need to take to make this system work. The panel could not have done a better job scrutinizing the defense acquisition system.

"During the course of the past year, they held 14 hearings and 2 briefings on a broad range of issues within the acquisition system, unearthing everything from egregious contract fraud to simple process errors that led to billions of wasted dollars. They put together an excellent report with suggestions to fix the system, and we are here today, with the good will of the House, to pass legislation that will enact their recommendations into law.

"The IMPROVE Acquisition Act will overhaul the defense acquisition system by:

- ◆ requiring the Department to set clear objectives for the defense acquisition system and manage performance in achieving those objectives,
- ◆ requiring DOD to introduce real accountability into the requirements process and create a requirements process for the acquisition of services,
- ◆ strengthening and revitalizing the acquisition workforce,
- ◆ requiring DOD to develop meaningful consequences for success or failure in financial management, and
- ◆ strengthening the industrial base to enhance competition and gain access to more innovative technology.

"In other words, this legislation would require DOD to adopt the basic management practices that are necessary for anything as complex as the acquisition system to function properly. These changes will make sure that the men and women who are risking their lives to protect this country are getting the proper equipment they need to do their jobs and to protect themselves and that it gets to them sooner. Additionally, we expect this bill to prevent the waste of billions of taxpayer dollars each year over the next five years.

"This bill has been bipartisan from the first moment. Its original co-sponsors included both Mr. Andrews and Mr. Conaway; myself and Buck McKeon. It passed the Armed Services Committee on a vote of 56-0. Yesterday, it was strongly endorsed by President Obama. I urge my colleagues to join us in sending the strongest possible message to the men and women of our military and to the American people that we are serious about protecting them, and about protecting their

pocketbooks. Vote "YES" on the IMPROVE Acquisition Act."</p>