

WASHINGTON, DC – The House of Representatives today overwhelmingly approved, by a vote of 420-2, an amendment authored by Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D – Ore) and Congressman Edward Markey (D – Mass.) prohibiting the use of federal funds for the torture of detainees in American custody and for sending detainees to countries that practice torture. Blumenauer and Markey offered their amendment in the wake of recent press accounts detailing how the United States government has deliberately sent detainees to foreign countries for the purpose of torturing them for information.

“I am appalled by continued revelations in the media regarding the torture of detainees in American custody,” Blumenauer said. “The use of torture and rendition is morally reprehensible and puts American troops at risk by degrading the moral and legal leverage we need to prevent its use against our men and women in uniform. Furthermore, it’s an ineffective way of obtaining reliable intelligence information in our fight against terrorism. Put simply, we set back the cause of democracy through these actions.”

To transfer detainees to foreign countries, in a process known as rendition, the CIA and other participating agencies use a single multimillion-dollar Gulfstream V jet. This jet is registered to a shadowy – and possible illegal – dummy front company, Bayard Foreign Marketing, LLC, based in Blumenauer’s hometown of Portland, Oregon. Fake front companies such as Bayard Foreign Marketing are used to hide the true scope and breadth of the extraordinary rendition program. As a member of the House International Relations Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Blumenauer has called for a Committee investigation into the torture of detainees as part of the United States’ foreign policy.

The amendment offered by Blumenauer and Markey and agreed to by the House of Representatives was part of the \$82 billion Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Iraq and Afghanistan and other foreign assistance, including tsunami area reconstruction. Nearly all of the supplemental money approved would fund continued military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Although the supplemental appropriation bill included Blumenauer’s amendment, he opposed the final version of the bill, because of his concerns about the misuse of funds in Iraq. In voting no on the supplemental, Blumenauer said, “at its core, this bill gives too much money to the wrong people to do the wrong thing. The unfortunate fact is, as I feared from the beginning, that the administration continues to have no plan for success in Iraq, no blueprint for winning the peace, and no plan to keep the troops adequately protected while they are there.”