

Armed Services Subcommittee Approves Two UXO Requests

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WASHINGTON, D.C. --- Late last week, the Military Readiness Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee marked up their portion of the defense authorization bill for next year. U.S. Delegate Robert Underwood (D-Guam) offered an amendment that included two of Congressman Earl Blumenauer's (D-OR) specific requests on unexploded ordnance (UXO) cleanup. The amendment passed by voice vote with no opposition. The full Armed Services Committee is expected to mark-up this bill on Wednesday.

The amendment establishes a UXO Program Manager at the Department of Defense to serve as a single point of contact for policy and budgeting issues regarding former military facilities. It also creates an independent oversight and review panel on UXO issues. Both provisions are part of Blumenauer's larger UXO bill (H.R. 2605), which lays out policy guidelines for the government's cleanup of unexploded ordnance.

Congressman Blumenauer said, "A single point of contact will bring more attention and focus to the problem of UXO. It will enable moving forward more rapidly on doing the research and development that's needed, and on actually getting UXO cleaned up. Additionally, establishment of an independent oversight panel will ensure that the best science is being used in addressing UXO and that the voices of other affected agencies and the public are heard."

Millions of acres of land and internal waterways within the United States are contaminated with UXO. Nearly 2,000 formerly-used defense sites are known or suspected to contain UXO. Sites containing UXO exist in every state and nearly every Congressional district. These sites, such as bombing ranges and testing facilities, were once located in underpopulated areas. However, distance is no longer a protective factor and these sites are now often bordered by housing developments and schools or contained within parks and other public lands.