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Compromise defense bill includes \$448M for Guam

Daily Post Staff Jul 28, 2018



CONSTRUCTION: Equipment operator Timothy Sheehan, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11, Detachment Guam, cycles a heavy construction pump. The latest version of the defense spending bill for fiscal year 2019 includes \$448 million in construction projects for Guam. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Navy

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed the conference agreement on the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, by a vote of 359-54.

Del. Madeleine Bordallo announced Friday the conference agreement fully authorizes \$448 million for military construction projects on island to support the ongoing process to move about 4,100 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam.

"This bill includes key provisions important to Guam that support the Marine relocation while keeping the military accountable to its commitments to our people."

– **Del. Madeleine Bordallo**

The projects include \$75.6 million for X-Ray Wharf improvements. The bill fully authorizes \$141 million for a machine-gun range, with half authorized to be spent in fiscal 2019.

The agreement builds on authorizations in the fiscal 2018 defense spending law and provides further flexibility for the U.S.

Citizenship and Immigration Services to administer the H-2B visa program for temporary foreign workers on Guam, Bordallo's office stated.

Specifically, the agreement further extends the 2018 NDAA's exemption from USCIS' requirement that the foreign workers being petitioned are to perform temporary work. The exemption continues until Dec. 31, 2023.

Health care workers

Additionally, it further allows for the admittance of health care workers to Guam through the H-2B visa program to augment the increased need for skilled health care supporting the buildup at medical facilities that jointly serve members of the military and their dependents, and civilians on Guam.

Bordallo said she further built on this provision earlier this week in introducing H.R. 6480, the Guam Temporary Workforce Act, which would give the governor more control over the temporary labor determination process. This would be done by providing the governor with authority to determine the need for temporary workers in Guam's civilian labor market.

The legislation also would provide the governor with the ability to safeguard the local economy from an overreliance on temporary workers, the delegate said.

Land return initiative

Bordallo added that her proposal would make permanent in federal law the Department of Defense "net-negative" land return

The projects

Here are the projects being funded under the new version of the defense spending bill:

Navy projects

- Gym and dining: \$27.9 million
- Earth-covered magazines \$52.2 million
- Machine-gun range: \$141.2 million

- Region Marianas ordnance operations: \$22 million
- Unaccompanied service members' housing: \$36 million
- X-Ray Wharf improvements, berth 2: \$75.6 million

Air Force projects

- Hayman munitions storage igloos: \$9.8 million
- Replacement of family housing units at Andersen Air Force Base, Phase 3: \$83.4 million

Source: Del. Madeleine Bordallo's office

commitment.

The "net-negative" commitment requires the military to hold less land on Guam than it did when the military buildup started. The Bordallo provision would establish a formal process by which the governor can formally request additional land previously held by the military in addition to those plots already outlined in law.

Bordallo also secured language to support the Guam and U.S. ship repair industry by preventing the Navy from redeveloping the former Ship Repair Facility on Guam for any purpose other than depot-level ship repair capability.

"This bill includes key provisions important to Guam that support the Marine relocation while keeping the military accountable to its commitments to our people," Bordallo said, adding, "The bill makes permanent the military's promise to hold less lands on Guam and improve transparency by publicly listing all properties it expects to return to GovGuam."