



NEWS RELEASE

Congressman Robin Hayes
8th District, North Carolina



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Congressman Robin Hayes Continues Efforts to Address Problem of Domestic Violence in the U.S. Armed Forces

Hayes' "Military Family Advocacy Act" Among Several New Initiatives Adopted in the HASC Total Force Subcommittee

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Robin Hayes (NC-8), a member of the U.S. House Armed Services Committee (HASC), is continuing his efforts to address the problem of domestic violence in the U.S. Armed Forces. Hayes announced that the HASC Total Force Subcommittee has adopted his legislation, the *Military Family Advocacy Act*, as part of the *FY'04 National Defense Authorization Act*. This bill is designed to give military chaplains greater authority use resources to strengthen military families and prevent domestic violence.

Last year, in the wake of several murders involving soldiers stationed at Fort Bragg, Hayes, who represents Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, requested that the HASC conduct a series of fact-finding meetings at Fort Bragg and in the Fayetteville community to examine the problem of domestic violence in the military. Following these meetings, Hayes has also been working closely with the Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence (DTFDV). Hayes announced that a number of other initiatives recommended by the DTDV were also adopted. Hayes commended the committee leadership for their bipartisan approach to seeking to reduce this problem.

"We must do everything that we can to eliminate domestic violence whether it be in or out of the military," said Hayes. **"Last year, we were all reminded of the tragic consequences that can result if this problem is not addressed. Following listening sessions at Fort Bragg, we made some real progress in addressing this problem through the *Armed Forces Domestic Security Act*. That measure was just a first step, not a final solution.**

"Following up on that, I introduced legislation earlier this year to continue this process. The *Military Family Advocacy Act* is another important step in this long process. Many times, the chaplains in our various armed forces are the most knowledgeable about potentially dangerous domestic situations. The bill gives them the maximum flexibility to work with all family members to prevent potentially tragic situations. I want to work to strengthen the resources for our chaplains. This is important for our soldiers and for our military."

Military chaplains provide counseling services and other resources designed to prevent incidents of domestic violence involving service personnel. However, in previous years, the chaplains have not been able to spend any of their program funding on non-service personnel, including spouses and other

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members of the soldier's immediate family. Consequently, their efforts have not been as effective as they could be if they were able to counsel the family as a whole. Presently, under a provision included in the *FY 03 Defense Appropriations*, chaplains are allowed to include immediate family members. However, this provision expires at the end of this fiscal year (September 30, 2003).

Hayes' legislation, the MFAA, would make this measure permanent thereby giving the chaplains greater flexibility in addressing domestic violence and other issues facing military families. Last year, in the wake of several murders involving soldiers stationed at Fort Bragg, Hayes, who represents Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, requested that the HASC conduct a series of fact-finding meetings at Fort Bragg and in the Fayetteville community to examine the problem of domestic violence in the military.

During the course of last year's Fort Bragg meetings, Hayes was made aware of a dangerous loophole that did not require protective orders issued by civilian courts to be enforced on military facilities. Therefore, the domestic violence victim could have been without the critical extra physical protection while on federal property. After learning this information, Hayes drafted and introduced the *Armed Forces Domestic Security Act*. Under Hayes' leadership, this bill was passed out of the House and has been signed into law by the president.

The HASC Total Force Subcommittee also adopted a number of other DTFDV initiatives in the *FY'04 National Defense Authorization Act*:

- Funding provided for travel and transportation for military dependents who are relocating for reasons of personal safety.
- Funding provided additional flexibility for transitional compensation.
- Funding provided to ensure that necessary resources are available for Department of Defense implementation organization.
- Funding provided for fatality reviews which are now mandated.

"Congressman Hayes has worked tirelessly on these issues," said **Congressman Duncan Hunter (CA-52), Chairman of the HASC**. *"These provisions represent important advances in military personnel policy. We're fortunate to have Hayes' leadership both in Congress and on behalf of military families."*

"Congressman Hayes and I have been digging into this issue for months to make sure we're doing all we can to address this problem," said **Rep. John M. McHugh (NY-23), Chairman of the Total Force Subcommittee**. *"He spearheaded our visit to Fort Bragg last year and we have partnered together on a series of legislative initiatives to improve our military family support system. This is a high priority for the Total Force Subcommittee and we will continue working to strengthen military families and combat domestic violence."*

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