



OR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Sue Walitsky 202-224-4524

September 27, 2008

## **CARDIN, MIKULSKI SEND BILL TO PRESIDENT WITH \$9.8 MILLION FOR EASTERN SHORE DEFENSE PROJECT**

*Includes \$1.4 billion for Maryland projects*

WASHINGTON, DC – Senators **Benjamin L. Cardin and Barbara A. Mikulski** (both D-MD) today announced the fiscal year 2009 Military Construction/Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense spending bill includes \$1.4 billion for defense and military-related spending in Maryland, including \$9.8 million in the Eastern Shore. Both bills passed the Senate today as part of the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act. That legislation now heads to the President to be signed into law.

The Military Construction/Veterans Affairs spending bill provides over \$1.4 billion for military construction projects at Maryland's military facilities, including \$865 million in Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) projects. The bill also includes \$87.9 billion funding for critical Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs, including \$41 billion in discretionary funding to improve the quality of facilities and care offered by the Veteran's Health Administration, which is \$3.5 billion more than the President's budget request. This includes \$375 million that will allow the VA to enroll thousands of Priority 8 veterans previously not eligible for benefits. The bill also provides \$94 million above the President's budget request to hire at least 1100 additional claims processors to address the backlog of compensation, pension, and disability claims. It also rejects the President's proposal to cut assistance for homeless veterans.

"I am proud that this bill contains the resources necessary to provide Maryland's installations and communities with the resources needed to implement the BRAC recommendations, care for our veterans, and improve the quality of life for military families," said **Senator Cardin**. "This legislation is critical to our country's current and future military mission."

"I told Maryland's military leaders I would fight for this funding. My promises made are promises kept," said **Senator Mikulski**. "A stronger America begins at home. That's why I fight every year to make sure our military has the tools it needs to keep us safe. I will keep up my work to make sure Maryland communities have the resources in the federal checkbook to implement BRAC recommendations and sustain our military installations."

The Military Construction/Veterans Affairs spending bill provides \$9.8 million for an Army National Guard Readiness Center in Salisbury. The funding will be used to upgrade a training facility for Maryland's National Guardsman.

###