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CONTACT: Barry Toiv
202-408-7500

AAU PRAISES SENATE PASSAGE OF BIPARTISAN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AMENDMENT TO DEFENSE BILL

The Senate today passed, by voice vote, an amendment to the defense authorization bill sponsored by Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Susan Collins (R-ME), and 21 other senators that would authorize an additional $45 million in Fiscal Year 2007 for defense basic research and for a key program that encourages more students to enter science and engineering disciplines. Their proposal amends the FY2007 defense authorization bill.

Specifically, the amendment:
• increases to $24.5 million (an increase of $5 million) the authorized spending level for the Department of Defense’s (DOD) SMART/National Defense Education Program, which aims to attract undergraduate and graduate students to study fields of science and engineering critical to national defense; the FY2006 spending level is $10 million, and the President requested $19.5 million for the program in FY2007;
• provides an additional $40 million for defense research, most of which is for basic university research, divided among the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and the DARPA University Research Program in Computer Science and Cyber security.

Following is a statement on the Senate action by Association of American Universities (AAU)
President Robert Berdahl:

On behalf of the 60 leading U.S. research universities represented by AAU, I thank the Senate for approving the bipartisan education and basic research amendment to the FY07 defense authorization bill authored by Senators Kennedy and Collins and cosponsored by 21 of their colleagues. It is my hope that the House will agree to this provision and that it will be confirmed in the appropriations process.

This amendment will help the Defense Department maintain the technological edge that makes our men and women in uniform the world’s best by producing both the people and the ideas that go into creating these technologies.

First, the amendment provides significant additional resources to invest in basic research supported by the Defense Department. That research, much of which takes place at universities, forms the basis for the extraordinary technologies that protect our fighting men and women and make them more effective.

(MORE)
Second, those who produce these technologies at the Defense Department and in the nation’s defense industries must be U.S. citizens capable of receiving needed security clearances. Because our nation is not producing enough of its own scientists and engineers to do this essential work, DOD has created the SMART/National Defense Education Program to encourage more of the nation’s brightest students to pursue studies and careers in these disciplines. AAU’s support for this program is a key element of our National Defense Education and Innovation Initiative.

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The Association of American Universities is an association of 60 leading research universities in the United States and two in Canada, organized to develop and implement effective national and institutional policies supporting research and scholarship, graduate, professional, and undergraduate education, and public service in research universities. AAU universities award just over one-half of all U.S. doctoral degrees and 55 percent of those in sciences and engineering.

AAU recently issued a white paper, “National Defense Education and Innovation Initiative,” calling for investments and policy changes by the federal government and by universities and colleges to strengthen the nation’s research enterprise and produce more scientists and engineers.