

Rep. Peter Welch attempted yesterday to eliminate funding for a new bomber program in the 2012 Pentagon budget, directing the funding slated for the program instead to deficit reduction. Late last night, the House voted 92-328 against the Welch amendment.

The Department of Defense Appropriations Act (H.R. 2219) directs \$297 million for research and development on a new next generation bomber, despite questions raised about its usefulness. The Stimson Center, a respected Washington defense think tank, maintains that there is no compelling reason to fund the program. In 2010, the Office of Management and Budget concurred, saying "the current fleet is performing well and will be able to meet the threats expected in the foreseeable future."

"As Congress and the President work to get America's fiscal house in order, everything should be on the table," Welch said. "The Pentagon not only dodges the budget axe in this bill, it actually is rewarded with a \$17 billion increase. Meanwhile, other spending bills have slashed the Environmental Protection Agency by 15 percent, NASA by ten percent, and the Women and Infant Children program by nearly 11 percent. While this bomber program may be desirable to some, it comes at an unacceptable cost."

The House is still debating H.R. 2219, which sets the Pentagon budget for fiscal year 2012. A final vote is expected later this evening or tomorrow.