



H.R. 5443 - United States-Republic of Korea Defense Cooperation Improvement Act of 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 5443 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Ed Royce (R-CA) on February 14, 2008. The bill was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and was included in a larger bill, the Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Reform Act of 2008 (H.R. 5916) that was passed by the House on May 15, 2008, by voice vote. H.R. 5916 has not been considered by the Senate.

H.R. 5443 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 23, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 5443 provides that it is the sense of Congress that expeditious consideration of offers to sell defense articles, defense services, and major defense equipment to the Republic of Korea under the Arms Export Control Act is fully consistent with United States security and foreign policy interests and the objectives of world peace and security. The bill amends the Arms Export Control Act to provide the Republic of Korea with the same procurement process as members of NATO, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan.

BACKGROUND

The Arms Export Control Act (AECA) provides the legal framework for the sale of U.S. arms, munitions, and defense technology through a government-to-government process or through licensed commercial sales. It also sets the standards that foreign countries must meet in order to be eligible to purchase defense items. Under current law, the Administration is required to notify Congress within 30 calendar days of military sales for items over certain monetary values. The law allows a shorter notification period, 15 days, for sales to NATO allies, Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. The Administration can complete arms sales unless Congress passes legislation prohibiting the sale. The volume of arms exports has risen steadily over the last several years, and concerns have been raised by the Government Accountability Office regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of arms export process by the State Department.

The Republic of Korea (South Korea) has been a key ally of the United States in Asia for nearly 60 years. The U.S. currently has 29,000 soldiers stationed in South Korea and over the last ten years South Korea has purchased \$6.9 billion of United States defense articles through the Foreign Military Sales program.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office has not issued a cost estimate for H.R. 5443.

STAFF CONTACT

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