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Reyes Commends House Passage Of Intelligence Authorization Act

Washington, DC - *Today, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 5959, the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman Silvestre Reyes (D-TX) led the debate on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.*

"This bill contains several provisions to enhance our intelligence capabilities, improve accountability to Congress, provide transparency, and, most importantly, give the men and women of the Intelligence Community the tools they need to protect our nation," said Reyes.

The Intelligence Authorization Act sets classified funding levels for the 16 agencies of the Intelligence Community funded by the National Intelligence Program and the Military Intelligence Program. This year's bill adds significant resources for human intelligence collection against terrorists, increases investment in cutting-edge research and development, and allocates funds for the modernization of signals intelligence (SIGINT) capabilities, to include the integration of a global SIGINT Enterprise. H.R. 5959 also includes authorization for foundational funding of the Administration's proposed Comprehensive National Cybersecurity Initiative.

In addition to the requirements for reporting on the nuclear programs of Syria, North Korea, and Iran, the bill contains two provisions to enhance reporting on intelligence activities to the full membership of the congressional intelligence committees. One provision fences 75% of the covert action budget until the Intelligence Community has briefed the full Committee on all covert action operations, while a second provision inhibits the Administration's attempts to limit information to the so-called "Gang of Eight."

"The Administration has ignored its obligation to keep Congress 'fully and currently informed', and it makes Congress' oversight role increasingly challenging," said Reyes. "The language in our bill clarifies to the Administration that reporting to Congress is non-negotiable; it is an obligation that can no longer be evaded by broad assertions of executive power."

The bill also mandates implementation of security clearance reform, which would enable first- and second-generation Americans with critical language skills to serve in the Intelligence Community with proper clearances.

Following passage of the bill, Reyes said, "In spite of the Republican leadership's attempt to derail this incredibly important bill, I am very pleased that my colleagues saw through the cheap political ploys and voted to authorize a substantial increase in funding for critical intelligence operations. The House did the right thing and stood by the professionals committed to serving the Intelligence Community and the country."