

BILL SUMMARY

Dec. 7, 2006

The Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act

The Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act (PATA), key legislation introduced in Congress following Hamas' election victory in January, passed its final legislative hurdle today and will now be sent to President Bush for his signature.

The House approved by voice vote S. 2370, the Senate version of the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006, which the Senate passed by voice vote in June.

PATA is bipartisan legislation that ends direct aid and contact with the Hamas-controlled Palestinian Authority until Hamas renounces violence, recognizes Israel's right to exist and agrees to abide by all previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

PATA halts U.S. aid to the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, but allows U.S. assistance to be provided to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for certain limited purposes. It also allows for the unfettered delivery of humanitarian assistance and the continued funding of important programs of support for the Palestinian people on a case-by-case basis.

The original House bill was introduced by Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Tom Lantos (D-CA), who backed passage of the Senate version in the House. The Senate bill was introduced by Sens. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Joseph Biden (D-DE).

KEY PROVISIONS:

- PATA prohibits direct U.S. aid to the Hamas-controlled Palestinian Authority (PA) unless the president certifies that Hamas has recognized Israel's right to exist, renounced violence and accepted all previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians
- PATA allows humanitarian assistance to flow unfettered; and on a case-by-case approval by Congress, allows indirect non-humanitarian assistance the president deems is in the national security interests of the United States.
- PATA prohibits U.S. government officials from negotiating or meeting with members of Hamas and other terrorist groups and says that visas should not be issued to a representative of the Hamas-led PA.
- PATA prohibits the PA and PLO from maintaining an office or headquarters in Washington, but provides the president waiver authority every six months to allow the office to remain open should he determine it is in the country's national interest.

- PATA allows funding for wider efforts to promote democracy and human rights. It also permits assistance to the office of the PA president for expenses directly related to facilitating a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or for the personal security detail of the PA president. These exceptions are subject to stringent presidential certification, such as meeting national security interests and a determination by the president that neither the PA president nor his party engages in terrorism.