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## **New Jersey's Fourth Congressional District**

*Includes parts of Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth & Ocean Counties*

# **Smith Amendment On Navy Earle OKed in House, Requires Cost Study**

**WASHINGTON** - Congressman Chris Smith announced today that the House of Representatives has adopted an amendment he offered to the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 2647) to require a Government Accountability Office (GAO) study of the Navy's controversial proposal to open the Laurelwood housing complex on Naval Weapons Station Earle (NWS Earle), the largest munitions depot on the East Coast.

**"My amendment will ensure that the Department of Defense has done its due diligence and that we have access to the information that is needed regarding this ill-conceived proposal,"** Smith said. **"This outdated and egregiously flawed plan will significantly and adversely impact our local community, and it's time we got realistic cost numbers so we can plan and budget accordingly."**

The Navy entered into a Section 801 Housing agreement in the 1980s to build 300 units on Earle and is required to provide mandatory federal payment to the developer—estimated to be \$3.5 million a year—regardless of occupancy. Because of changed home porting plans and civilianization of certain ships, there are currently less than 10 sailors or dependents that live there.

The Smith amendment states that the Comptroller General must submit to Congress "a cost analysis and audit of the sufficiency of the Navy's security measures in advance of proposed occupancy by the general public."

**"For the first time, one report will be issued that that shows the total costs to all interested parties affected by this plan,"** Smith said.

The Navy included limited cost estimates that it will bear when it issued its Record of Decision (ROD), but failed to take into account any cost estimates to other federal agencies, state and local governments or taxpayers in the surrounding areas.

On Tuesday night, Smith persuaded the House Committee on Rules to include this amendment in the floor debate.

**“Until now, the security of our local community and the costs we will bear when this proposal is implemented has been deferred to the one interest that has a conflict of interest: the Navy,”** Smith said. **“My amendment will change that and provide the independent review and assessment this critical matter deserves.”**

The amendment was included in the National Defense Authorization Act (HR 2647) which passed the House today.

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