

## Support our Troops

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By MARY ROSENTHAL, Executive Director, [Algae Biomass Organization](#) [1]



One of the most popular bumper stickers and signs you see on the roads today read: “Support our Troops.” The U.S. Senate recently voted to support our troops — as well as the biofuels industry, the national economy and our overall national security — by stripping language from the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which would have prohibited the Department of Defense from purchasing alternative fuel unless it was cost-competitive with traditional fossil fuel.

By a bipartisan vote of 62-37, members of the Senate made it clear that their position is to allow the Department of Defense to continue its support of biofuels for military purposes.

The vote eliminated one of two amendments that are highly detrimental to our industry that were inserted into the Senate version of the NDAA during a “mark-up.” Besides the amendment that would have prohibited the Department of Defense (DOD) from purchasing biofuel unless it was cost-competitive, the bill still contains language that would prohibit the DOD from investing in biorefineries.

These kinds of amendments would make it nearly impossible for the Navy and other branches of the military to foster a domestic renewable fuel industry, better control pricing and supply, and de-couple the military from reliance on energy from foreign countries.

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus said it best in April of this year: “We would never let the countries that we buy fuel from build our ships or our planes, but we give them a say on whether those ships sail or those planes fly because we’re dependent on them for fuel.”

### **Bipartisan Vote**

Eleven Republicans joined in the vote, proving the bipartisan support for the military’s efforts to promote a robust domestic biofuels supply chain in the United States. Members of both parties can see that a source of renewable fuel would go a long way in helping the military accomplish its mission by reducing its dependence

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on foreign oil and the budget spikes with price volatility.

Moreover, it would reduce the enormous cost in lives that must be endured to protect fuel supply lines and shipping lanes. It would also give developers of advanced biofuels the certainty that their products will have a stable early-adopter ready to use their fuels.

I know many of us are working in the biofuels space because we strongly believe our national security and economic well-being depends on home-grown fuel. Strong bipartisan votes like this affirm that we know the risks and the benefits, and that we are ready to double down on our efforts to give America the energy advantage our nation deserves.

Federal support for nascent energy technologies is not without precedent. In fact, the natural gas revolution that has been unleashed by hydraulic fracturing (fracking) technology was originally funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. The military has led other energy revolutions as well; they pioneered the transitions from ships driven by the wind to those steaming with coal, then on to cruising with petroleum and nuclear reactors.

By providing advanced biofuels with stable support for research and deployment, the Department of Defense will be on the forefront once again. The military advantage is obvious, and the potential economic advantages cannot be ignored.

This is an important win for the biofuels community. While the House version of the NDAA still includes language prohibiting the DOD from purchasing alternative fuel that is not cost-competitive with traditional fossil fuels, the elimination of this language from the Senate bill makes this issue one that will have to be resolved when the House and Senate work out the NDAA differences in conference committee.

### **The Work Is Not Finished**

In other words, our work to educate elected officials is not finished.

Regardless of your feedstock or technology, I encourage you to add your voice to the many that have already made the case for biofuels support in the NDAA.

Support our troops. Support our industry. Support our country.

*What's your take? Please feel free to comment below! Copyright 2012; [Biofuels Digest](#) [2]*

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