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House passes conference report for appropriations bill prioritizing funding for project

November 17, 2011

WASHINGTON – The Berlin Prison is yet another step closer to opening after the House of Representatives passed, with the support of Congressman Charles F. Bass (NH-02), an appropriations bill that includes funding for the Bureau of Prisons. The legislation also prioritizes the activation of constructed but unopened federal prisons like the one in Berlin.

The House passed the conference report for the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Bill by a vote of 298 to 121 this afternoon. The Senate must now pass the conference report and the President must sign it into law before the funding can take effect for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2012.

Bass said:

"This is tremendous news for Berlin and New Hampshire's North Country. This prison has been sitting empty for too long at a huge cost to taxpayers. I'm extremely glad that Congress finally was able to come together and pass an appropriations bill to prioritize and fund the prison's opening. This will be a huge boost to the economic well-being of the area and I'm looking forward to having the doors of the Berlin Prison open once and for all.

"I urge the Senate to pass this quickly and the President to sign it into law as soon as possible so we can get more people back to work in the North Country."

Berlin Mayor Paul Grenier said, "I want to thank Congressman Bass for really working with me and the rest of the North Country since he came back to Congress. He's been up here about once a month, I speak to him on a regular basis, and he knows how desperately important the Berlin Prison project is to the city. He has played an integral role in marshalling this project through the House and I thank him for that."

Once opened, the Berlin Prison is expected to house over 1,000 medium and minimum security adult male offenders and its day-to-day operation is estimated to create over 300 jobs. The project is estimated to have a \$40 million annual impact on the area.

Bass has long advocated for opening the federal prison in Berlin. Earlier this summer, he worked with the House Appropriations Committee to help author the language prioritizing funding for federal prisons that have been constructed but not yet activated, such as the Berlin Prison, which was included in the bill. The Senate Appropriations Committee later included similar language in their version of the bill. Bass continued to work with his colleagues to ensure the prioritization language was included in the final conference report.

Bass spoke on the House floor this afternoon in support of the legislation. Click here to view the video: <http://youtu.be/xLcu9ioDt4> .

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