

# Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission

# EARLY



# BIRD

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### **Last-ditch attempt to ditch BRAC fails**

Biloxi Sun Herald

Brian P. Nanos

October 28, 2005

The House of Representatives on Thursday overwhelmingly rejected legislation that would have set aside the recommendations of the Base Realignment and Closure commission.

Proposals made by the commission -- charged with saving money by closing military bases around the country -- included the closure of Naval Station Pascagoula on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The proposals were signed by President Bush and unless rejected by Congress will become law on Nov. 8.

The resolution required to stop the base closings, authored by Rep. Ray LaHood, R-Ill., failed by a vote of 324-85.

U.S. Rep. Gene Taylor, Democrat from Bay St. Louis, was one of the congressmen who spoke out against the BRAC recommendations and the BRAC process in general. According to Taylor, the process of deciding which bases to close is

included in Congress' constitutional job description.

"I didn't run for Congress to delegate my responsibilities," Taylor said. "Let's not hide behind some committee to do our job for us."

Taylor and other congressmen also argued that some of the bases being closed could be needed in future unanticipated military conflicts.

"I can guarantee you that years from now we're going to discover that bases that we need were closed in this process," he said.

Among the other House members voting to reject the BRAC recommendations was U.S. Rep. Tom Delay, R-Texas. Delay opposes the closing of an Air Force Base in Texas and said the BRAC recommendations seemed to be based on "bean counting" rather than the well-being of the military.

### **House Ends BRAC Battle**

Daily Press (Newport News, Virginia)

David Lerman

October 28, 2005

Congress refuses to stop base closures. Fort Monroe will be shut down and Fort Eustis faces changes.

The House refused to block proposed military base closures by an overwhelming margin Thursday. That cleared the way for the closure of Hampton's Fort Monroe and a big restructuring of Fort Eustis in Newport News.

The decisive vote means the Pentagon will be allowed to close 22 major bases and close or realign hundreds of smaller ones nationwide beginning next month. Closing a base will take two to six years to complete.

The first base closure law in a decade, which President Bush signed last month, was scheduled to take effect automatically -- unless both houses of Congress approved a resolution rejecting the initiative. The House defeated the

resolution Thursday 324-85, and the Senate has no plans to act on one.

The law will have a profound effect on Hampton Roads, which boasts one of the country's largest concentrations of military personnel.

The closure of historic Fort Monroe -- a moat-encircled Army post that dates to 1823 -- will free up an estimated 500 acres of prime waterfront property for redevelopment. But the shutdown will cost the Peninsula about 1,000 jobs.

The law also puts the future of Oceana Naval Air Station in jeopardy. It requires Virginia Beach to curb suburban development around the base, as well as buy an estimated 1,800 homes to improve flight safety and training. If such steps aren't taken by next year, the future of Oceana and its 12,000 jobs could be revisited.

All four House members from Hampton Roads voted to block the base closure law. Local lawmakers complained from the beginning that base closures saved little money and shouldn't be conducted in a time of war.

Rep. Thelma Drake, R-Norfolk, initially supported the Pentagon's desire to shed excess infrastructure to better match a more streamlined fighting force. But Drake said she felt compelled to oppose the initiative based on what she described as the unfair treatment of Oceana from the independent closure commission that revised Defense Department recommendations.

Drake said, "I cannot, in good conscience, vote to allow the process to move forward."

The commission had recommended that Florida's Cecil Field Naval Air Station be reopened as an alternative for Oceana, even though some data used by Florida officials to propose that proved to be inaccurate. In a move that could help save Oceana, the mayor of Jacksonville, Fla., said last week that he was abandoning the effort to reopen Cecil Field.

Despite such protests, the outcome of Thursday's vote was never seriously in doubt. Opposition to

base closures had weakened substantially in recent months, particularly after the base closure commission voted to save several large bases that the Pentagon tried to close. Chief among them were a submarine base in Connecticut, a big Navy shipyard in Maine and an Air Force base in South Dakota.

Even some longtime House critics of base closure said they were prepared to accept the commission's recommendations, if only to get the matter behind them and avoid another fight over military bases next year.

"I don't want to go through this again," said Rep. Joel Hefley, R-Colo. He's a member of the House Armed Services Committee who voted to accept the base closure law. "Any of us with military bases don't want to go through this agony again."

The Pentagon initially estimated \$48 billion in savings from base closures over 20 years, but lawmakers said the commission's actions to save some bases, as well as revisions in estimates, meant that the real savings would be much smaller -- though still substantial.

The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee -- Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif. -- said the measure would save \$15 billion over 20 years. There would be annual savings of more than \$2.5 billion upon completion of all closures and realignments, he said. \*

### Local News Articles

#### **Base closing decision process coming to a close**

The Associated Press State & Local Wire (Little Rock, AR)  
October 28, 2005

A House vote that rejected a move to block a round of military base closures and consolidations cleared the way for the Pine Bluff Arsenal to expand and for the 188th Fighter Wing at Fort Smith to get a new mission.

The air base at Fort Smith was believed to be in danger of being closed, but the Base Realignment and Closure Commission instead recommended that duties at the base be shifted.

The House voted 324-85 on Thursday against a proposal to reject the commission's recommendations.

Under the commission package, the Pine Bluff Arsenal will get an \$8.9 million reserves building at the arsenal.

The commission recommendations, which were released Aug. 26, proposed doing away with the F-16 Air National Guard fleet at Fort Smith. But the panel also proposed a new mission for the base - a fleet of A-10 Warthogs. The twin-engine aircraft fly low and are used to support ground combat.

Affecting southwest Arkansas, the Lone Star Ammunition Plant in east Texas is to close. But the panel spared the larger Red River Army Depot next door.

Both facilities employ hundreds of Arkansans and area officials lobbied heavily to keep the installations open. The community had feared the loss of thousands of jobs if both bases closed. The plan calls for the loss of 357 jobs at Red River. Officials said 4,500 work either in the plants or in jobs related to the facilities.

The commission decision to recommend closing the Lone Star plant would mean the loss of another 400 jobs and 357 would be eliminated at Red River.

The Little Rock Air Force Base at Jacksonville had stood to see its C130 training mission grow, but the commission decided against a number of proposals that would have moved cargo more aircraft to the central Arkansas base.

"It pretty much signals the BRAC process is over," Rep. Mike Ross, D-Ark., said of Thursday's House vote. "Everyone agrees this round of BRAC has come and gone and the Pine Bluff Arsenal has survived."

The Arkansas delegation in the House was unanimous in voting against the legislation that would have blocked the plant.

The Senate still has to vote on the recommendations.

"The Pine Bluff Arsenal came out of the BRAC process a winner," Sen. Mark Pryor said in a news release. "It will remain a strong installation that plays a critical role in our overall national defense strategy and an economic engine for the community.

"I'm pleased the final recommendations are poised to be set in stone," Pryor said.

Rep. John Boozman, the only Republican delegation, said he foresees no difficulties in the upper chamber.

"My understanding is there should be no problem to approve the recommendations," Boozman said.

### **BRAC override plan fails in Congress**

Foster's Online (Dover, NH)

October 28, 2005

PORTSMOUTH — A proposal to override the entire 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Process was shot down in Washington, D.C. Thursday.

The House of Representatives voted 324 to 85 against a bill that, if also approved by the Senate and President Bush, would have made all approved base closures null and void.

With or without the bill's approval, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard would remain open, since the Base Realignment and Closure Commission had already voted to remove it from the Department of Defense's list of proposed closures. Only Congress has the power to initiate a new BRAC round.

Nonetheless, U.S. Rep. Jeb Bradley, R-N.H., called Thursday's bill "the final hurdle the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard needed to clear to

remain open," in a prepared statement following the vote.

"The BRAC Commission's recommendations to keep the shipyard open still stand," said Bradley, who voted against the bill. "This is the final chapter in a long fight to keep the pre-eminent shipyard in the nation from having to shut its doors."

U.S. Rep. Tom Allen, D-Maine, voted in favor of the proposal to reject the 2005 BRAC. On the floor of the House Thursday, Allen cited several reasons for his vote, including that the BRAC Commission had approved the closure of the Brunswick Naval Air Station.

Allen also reiterated previous disapproval to how the Department of Defense conducted the BRAC process, including assertions its recommendations ignored uncertainty in current wars and "future military needs" and that it failed to provide the commission with supporting data.

Added to Allen's list of issues with the DOD was a recent statement by BRAC Commissioner Phillip Coyle alleging some recommendations were based on Internet searches using the Google search engine.

Coyle made the statement to the "Inside The Air Force" publication on Oct. 18 during a conference in Laurel, Md.

"The Commission observed that several DOD plans to consolidate multiple military facilities were based not on in-depth analytic work but on Internet search engine queries used only to match facility names and functions," Allen said, referencing Coyle's remarks.

Bradley said the New Hampshire and Maine Congressional delegation is now focused on "ensuring that the Navy appropriately allocates work to the country's best performing Shipyard."

"Portsmouth saves the Navy millions of dollars every year by retuning submarines to the water ahead of schedule and under budget," Bradley said. "Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is an

indispensable part of our national security and we will continue our efforts to keep it operating for many years to come."

### **Base closure, realignment plan near conclusion**

North County Times (Escondido, CA)  
Mark Walker  
October 28, 2005

The chairman of the federal panel that spent 14 weeks coming up with a military base closure and realignment plan that left San Diego County largely unscathed said Thursday that he believes the next such effort should take place in five years.

Rancho Santa Fe native Anthony Principi, who was appointed by President Bush to head the Base Realignment and Closure Commission known as BRAC, said world geopolitics demand a flexible military infrastructure.

"There will be additional BRAC rounds, and in my opinion, there needs to be," said Principi as the full list of about 950 base closure and modification recommendations made by the commission move closer to being ratified. "We don't live in a static environment. Threats change and our national security posture will constantly have to be in transformation to meet the needs."

Principi spoke to the North County Times in a telephone interview from the commission's headquarters in Washington, D.C., as the House of Representatives was in the midst of voting overwhelmingly to reject a resolution that would have vetoed the panel's recommendations.

The House vote rejecting the resolution gives the go-ahead for the first major changes to the nation's base structure in 10 years. The Senate has not scheduled a vote on the report, and if no senator presses for one, the recommendations become law in mid-November.

The commission calls for closing 22 major bases nationwide and making major changes at another 29. Combined with a lengthy list of

minor realignments, the commission says the changes should result in an annual savings of more than \$4 billion.

In California, no major base closures were sought.

In the San Diego region, the commission recommended only small cuts and consolidations in the next several years. Those include transferring 118 civilian workers from the Fallbrook Naval Weapons Station, moving 1,600 student and instructor positions from the San Diego Naval Medical Center, also known as Balboa Naval Hospital, to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and shuttering the San Diego Defense Finance and Accounting Office.

Miramar Marine Corps Air Station would become the home of the brig now at Camp Pendleton, and Miramar would see about 40 instructor-pilots and support personnel transferred to Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. Miramar also picks up about 87 military positions and 34 civilian jobs.

Camp Pendleton is slated to lose a net of about 144 positions, and 10 mine sweeper ships would be transferred from Ingleside Naval Station in Texas to San Diego.

At March Air Reserve Base in Southwest Riverside County, two Air National Guard Reserve would be consolidated into a single command.

While Pentagon officials said that the Moreno Valley base is the most valuable of the 16 Air Reserve bases in the country, it could be made more efficient by consolidating it from two commands into one, and see other operations transferred to other states. In the end, March is slated to lose about 70 military and 40 civilian positions.

Principi said the biggest challenge for the commission and its 100-member staff was doing its work in about 14 weeks and responding to sometimes intense political and community pressure in areas slated for major changes.

"What also made this round difficult was the complexity because there is so much interrelationship between bases," he said. "If we touched one base, it affected another base.

"In the end, not everybody is happy, of course, but I think members of Congress respected the process and our openness and accessibility."

California escaped major changes because it "paid the piper" in previous BRAC rounds and is on solid footing to address military challenges in Asia and throughout the Pacific, Principi said.

The commission demanded that the Marine Corps explain why its recruit depot adjacent to Lindbergh Field in San Diego should stay open, and was ultimately satisfied with the arguments from Corps' brass that it was best to leave it open, he said.

"San Diego did well, as did the nation," Principi said. "Our men and women in uniform are ultimately going to be the real winners, and that is all the gratification I need."

Erik Bruvold at the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp., which headed the lobbying effort on behalf of local bases, said the county is poised to have an even greater military presence.

"In the coming years, there will be continued interest in consolidating activities into particular regions, and that bodes well for us," he said. "San Diego is already a megaport for the Navy and a major area for Marine recruiting and training.

"We are clearly well-positioned to benefit in the coming decades."

A small cadre of closure commission staffers will remain at work until April to archive millions of pages of documents and respond to congressional and public inquiries.

Principi, who has served roles in both Bush administrations, including a stint as secretary of Veterans Affairs, has been hired as the chief executive officer and chairman of the board of

QTC Management, a Diamond Bar company that specializes in medical evaluation and disability management for the private and public sector.

## **House approves plan that will add DFAS jobs**

Utica Observer Dispatch (Utica, NY)  
October 28, 2005

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon can start closing and consolidating dozens of U.S. military bases now that Congress has given it the go-ahead.

The House voted 324-85 Thursday to reject a proposal to derail the Base Realignment and Closure plan, dashing the hopes of some communities that Congress might save their bases and the jobs they provide. The Pentagon will close 22 major bases, restructure 33 others and make hundreds of smaller changes under the plan, which becomes law next month.

"We need all our resources to support our fighting men and women, and that means having the best and most efficient facilities," said Missouri Rep. Ike Skelton, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee.

The decision means the addition of 600 jobs at the Griffiss Business and Technology Park in Rome. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld had originally proposed closing the Defense Finance Accounting Service office there and transferring the Sensors Directorate of the Air Force Research Laboratory, costing the area about 500 jobs. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission overruled Rumsfeld's recommendation, however, deciding to add about 600 jobs at the finance center and transfer about 140 jobs to the Rome lab from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio to make up for the loss of 125 Sensors Directorate jobs.

The base closing list was proposed by the Pentagon in May and modified by a nine-member, president-appointed commission in late August.

President Bush endorsed the commission's final list in September, leaving Congress as the last chance to block the plan. But the BRAC commission's decision to save some of the biggest bases mollified many of the most vocal opponents.

The military has two years to start shutting down and consolidating affected bases and some of that work could start as early as January.

### **Fort's last-gasp hopes dashed**

Asbury Park Press (Asbury Park, NJ)

Keith Brown

October 28, 2005

Alison Wollman said she would reluctantly take off her rose-colored glasses Thursday after learning Congress gave the Pentagon the go-ahead to begin shutting down Fort Monmouth.

"It's been a great run, and now you have to adjust," said Wollman, whose husband, Hank, is a Fort Monmouth civilian engineer of 20 years. "There are no guarantees."

The House voted 324 to 85 to reject a proposal that would have derailed the Base Realignment and Closure plan, dashing the faint hopes that Congress might pass a last-minute measure to save the 88-year-old post and others around the country.

The Pentagon now can start closing Fort Monmouth, expanding Picatinny Arsenal and merging McGuire Air Force Base, Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Station and Fort Dix into a megabase. The Department of Defense will close 22 major bases, restructure 33 others and make hundreds of smaller changes under the plan, which becomes law next month.

The biggest hit for New Jersey will be at Fort Monmouth, which will move much of its communications and electronics research to Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

"I'm not surprised. Disappointed, but not surprised," said Tinton Falls Mayor Peter

Maclearie, whose town — along with Eatontown and Oceanport — will be most affected by the loss of the fort's 5,552 civilian and military jobs.

"Maybe it was all too obvious from the beginning. The lines were drawn. It's time to accept reality and move forward," Maclearie said.

Thursday's vote also was no surprise to George Markos, owner of Zeek's Kitchens and Bath just outside the fort in Eatontown. He believes his business will survive but likely will be far slower than it was before the Pentagon's May announcement about the closing.

"All the business I used to do with the fort, I think that's gone forever," he said.

### **Streamlining the military**

The Pentagon wants to close bases to save money and reorganize the military so it is better prepared to fight terrorism and modern wars. But opponents, mostly those representing installations that will be closed or scaled back, said this is the wrong time for such a move.

"I cannot emphasize enough how damaging it will be for our country if we fail to preserve our research and development infrastructure, particularly in the areas of communications and intelligence," said Rep. Rush D. Holt, whose district includes Fort Monmouth. "Halting this flawed process would have enabled us to enhance, rather than degrade, the security of our country. Unfortunately, Congress has now squandered that opportunity."

The Pentagon's base-closing list was modified, but largely upheld, by the nine-member, president-appointed Base Realignment and Closure commission in late August.

President Bush endorsed the commission's final list in September, leaving congressional action as the last chance to block the plan.

Overall, New Jersey will lose about 3,800 civilian and military jobs, according to the BRAC commission.

Among the state's congressional delegation, those voting against it were Democratic Reps. Holt, Robert E. Andrews, Robert Menendez, Frank J. Pallone Jr., William J. Pascrell and Steven R. Rothman and Republican Rep. Christopher H. Smith.

Rep. Smith dismayed

Smith, the dean of the New Jersey delegation, faulted the BRAC commission for acknowledging that closing Fort Monmouth poses risks to troops in the field but endorsing closure anyway.

"At such a crucial time in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Congress needs to ensure that our troops are provided with the best equipment and technology to successfully carry out daily missions," he said. "Any inclination that current capabilities and critical operations could be disrupted, as stated by the commission, should have been enough to reverse the Fort Monmouth decision."

The military has two years to start shutting down and consolidating affected bases, and some of that work could start as early as January, Defense Department spokesman Glenn Flood said. Bases on the list must be closed by 2011.

"We keep moving and become more earnest in our efforts to create the Fort Monmouth Reuse Authority," said Eatontown Mayor Gerald J. Tarantolo, referring to the panel that will decide how to redevelop the post's 1,100 acres after operations there halt. "Hopefully, we'll make this transition much more rapidly than other communities who did not, and maybe that will save us the fate of those who acted slowly."

### **Belvoir updates population numbers**

Belvoir Times (Fort Belvoir, VA)

Julia LeDoux

October 27, 2005

Who are they and how will they get here?

That's the question that Fort Belvoir's BRAC Implementation Team Leader Lee Marshall has been wrestling with since the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's May announcement that an additional 21,000 personnel could be coming to the installation by 2011.

That many more people is like putting another city over the existing Fort Belvoir, Fairfax County Supervisor Gerry Hyland pointed out at the garrison's annual Community Update Breakfast Oct. 18. He added that would have a definite impact on traffic patterns and other infrastructure serving the post.

In order to get ahead of the curve in planning for the new arrivals, Marshall said that Fort Belvoir is taking steps, including the recent distribution of a transportation survey, which he hopes will shed light on how people currently travel from their homes to their offices.

The installation's total strength is currently around 30,000 people, according to Marshall, who cautioned that figure is not entirely accurate due to the way some portions of the population were counted.

Approximately 6,631 people live in housing on post, according to Marshall. Military personnel and spouses who also work at Fort Belvoir would have been counted twice - once for working at the post and again for living here - in the survey, he said.

"We did double count," Marshall said. "The folks who live in housing and who work here were all counted twice. I think what bothered the county the most is they had never seen the 30,000 figure before."

Marshall's previous discussions with the county that centered on BRAC have focused on Belvoir's working population, and did not include post housing residents.

"We always focus on the people who are coming here on the highways," he said. "We are trying to complete as accurate a picture as possible." Marshall stressed that estimates of Belvoir's post BRAC total working population of around

46,000 have not varied greatly since the panel's recommendations were announced in the spring.

"You plan for a dynamic situation," he said.

In order to get a handle on how the post's current workforce of 23,000 gets to their jobs, Marshall sent out a web-based survey last week that asked them to provide their zip code and to answer questions on whether they would carpool, use public transportation, or telecommute if those options were available to them.

"We need to be able to say what their commuting patterns are," noted Marshall.

A similar survey that was conducted in 2003 determined that two-thirds of the authorized workforce lived south and west of the post.

"They're coming from Burke, Lorton, and Prince William," said Marshall.

Ten percent of the 2003 survey's recipients responded to the survey, and Marshall is hopeful that more people will answer the questions this time around. Results from the current survey are expected to be announced in mid-December.

"We will continue to do surveys like this periodically," he explained.

Which roads people use to get to Fort Belvoir will be dependent on where the organizations slated to move to post are located, Marshall continued.

"Transportation solutions are also dependent on siting," he said.

Highway widening might not be the only solution to making getting to post easier, and options such as additional exit lanes and flyovers should be considered, he said.

The BRAC 2005 recommendations, which have been accepted by President George W. Bush and await congressional approval, would need to be complete by 2011 if passed into federal law.

## **Officials Fear Base Jobs at Risk ; Meet With Defense Official to Block Rumored Stealth Move of Jobs to Massachusetts**

Dayton Daily News (Dayton, OH)

October 28, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Concerned about rumors that the Air Force might try to quietly push through a Defense Department proposal to send Wright-Patterson jobs to Massachusetts, a group of Ohio lawmakers is urging the deputy undersecretary of defense to abide by the decision of the independent base closure commission.

The group -- Sens. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio, George Voinovich, R- Ohio, Rep. David Hobson, RSpringfield, and staff members for Rep. Michael Turner, R-Centerville, met with Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Michael Wynne on Tuesday to reiterate their commitment to keeping jobs from the Development and Fielding Systems Group at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Wynne, who took the lead on many Defense base closure issues, is also President Bush's nominee for Air Force Secretary.

A Defense Department base closure proposal made this year would have stripped at least 2,250 jobs from Wright-Patterson and moved them to Hanscom Air Force Base in Massachusetts, according to Pentagon estimates. The Wright-Patterson jobs in question focus primarily on buying and supporting automated business systems.

A plan to close and reconfigure hundreds of military bases is sailing through Congress, on track to take effect next month. In a longshot attempt to halt the first round of base closings in a decade, the House planned a vote today on a proposal to reject the final report of the 2005 base-closing commission. Even base-closing opponents considered the effort certain to fail, like Congress' attempts to stop the four previous rounds. To kill the process, the Senate also would have to veto the report -- and the chances of that are slim to none.

DeWine spokesman Jeff Sadosky said that Tuesday's meeting was arranged in response to rumors in the Dayton area that the Defense Department might still try to go ahead with the move despite the commission's decision in August to keep the jobs at Wright- Patterson.

DeWine, Voinovich and Hobson sent Wynne a letter Wednesday reiterating their opposition to any DFSG moves from Wright- Patterson to Hanscom. "We are strongly against any effort to make such a move and appreciate your assurance that "nobody is looking to undo the BRAC outcomes," the group wrote.

"(Wynne) seems to feel that it's settled," Sadosky said, adding that the group plans to continue monitoring any job moves in or out of Wright-Patterson.

### **Opinions/ Editorials**

**Congress defeats its own weakness**  
Charleston Daily Mail (Charleston, WV)  
October 28, 2005, Friday

The Pentagon will be allowed to save Americans \$ 4.2 billion

THE American people's view of the Department of Defense has been shaped by tales of expensive hammers and toilets, bungled contracts and gargantuan cost overruns.

But to a multibillion-dollar degree, the Pentagon's reputation for wastefulness is unearned. It is sometimes a victim of Congress, whose members see national defense through the lens of pork-barrel politics.

The truth is, the Pentagon has been forced to operate many more military assets than it wants or needs. That impairs its ability to face new challenges.

To deal with this, members of Congress eventually invented a Rube Goldbergian device, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, that allows them to defeat themselves.

In the latest exercise of this mechanism, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld proposed that the Pentagon be allowed to close 33 "major" military bases (defined as having a replacement cost of \$ 100 million or more), and realign 29 other bases.

This proposal went to a nine-member commission that examined every proposal, listened to the cries of outrage, and agreed that the Pentagon should be allowed to close 22 major military bases and reconfigure 33 others.

The president accepted the proposal and passed it to Congress. It becomes law in 45 days unless both the Senate and the House of Representatives pass a resolution to kill it.

The House voted 324-85 Thursday to allow the closures. Senators are expected to go along.

The Department of Defense, which had hoped to save \$ 5.4 billion a year, will be allowed to stop spending \$ 4.2 billion annually instead.

Over a decade, that will save Americans real money.

And in previous rounds of this game, some base closures that local officials feared have turned into bonanza developments instead.

The Wall Street Journal reported that a medical center in Oakland, Calif., fetched a winning bid of \$ 22.5 million in 2002. When the deal fell through and a second auction was held, the top bid was \$ 93.5 million.

A marvelous system, democracy. In a pinch, Americans can defeat themselves, and thus win.

### **Additional Notes**