

By **DOROTHY SCHNEIDER**

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GROTON-- U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons said Tuesday he made the right decision last week to vote against a measure that would have cut funding from the Base Realignment and Closure process.

Simmons and fellow U.S. Rep. Nancy Johnson, R-5th District, from Connecticut, initially voted for the bill that would have cut \$169 million from BRAC to instead fund veterans programs, including those that support families of troops killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But under last-minute pressure from GOP leaders, both representatives changed their minds and the measure lost by a single vote.

Simmons said his reasoning was simple.

"We're fighting to save our submarine base here in Groton, Connecticut," he said. "But we know across the country there are bases that may close -- and those bases are going to rely on the federal government to assist them to clean up the mess."

The Naval Submarine Base in Groton has widespread environmental contamination.

Communities who lose bases need to see those sites cleaned up and reused so the town can recover, Simmons said.

"I don't think it's appropriate to take money out of the cleanup fund and remove it for any purpose," Simmons said. "In fairness to those communities that may be confronted with closure, they should have dollars for the cleanup.

"And on that basis and looking at the bill more carefully, I decided that this was not the way to fund those activities," he added.

Simmons came under fire over the weekend when the Democrat Campaign Congressional Committee ran radio advertisements in the area criticizing him for not supporting military benefits funding.

But Simmons condemned the statements, pointing to his years of service in the Vietnam War.

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The Associated Press contributed to this report.