WASHINGTON (AP) - A $108 billion-plus bill to fund military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and hurricane relief on the Gulf Coast continues to grow despite a veto threat from President Bush.

The Senate voted Tuesday to protect homestate projects added by some of its most senior members as the tide turned against efforts by spending hawks to strip them out. The bill heads to a final Senate vote Wednesday.

While conservatives pressed and lost a 59-40 vote to cut $6 million in aid to Hawaii sugar companies to recover from flood damages caused by recent torrential rains, they allowed without protest $1.6 billion to be added to the measure for levees and other flood control projects in and around New Orleans.

Unlike Bush's request last week, the additional flood control funds would not be offset by cutting funding elsewhere in the bill.

Bush proposed paying for his updated request for New Orleans flood control projects by cutting from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's chief relief fund, which finances a wide variety of disaster activities.

Once the bill passes the Senate, a difficult set of talks await the House, Senate and White House.

A spate of extras added by the Senate Appropriations Committee include $4 billion for farm disaster aid, $1.1 billion in aid for Gulf Coast fisheries, and $648 million for port security.

"The Senate emergency spending bill represents a huge spending spree," said House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., and Majority Leader John Boehner, R-Ohio, in a statement. "The American people don't deserve a special interest shopping cart disguised as a supplemental."

About $14 billion would need to be cut from the Senate bill to bring it into line with Bush's veto threat. Bush requested $92.2 billion for the war and hurricane relief and an additional $2.3 billion to combat avian flu.

But the way the White House chose to finance the levee aid it proposed just last week, by tapping FEMA coffers, is hardly perfect. The White House acknowledges that the effect of cutting FEMA funding means they would have to be replenished again in the fall instead lasting until next year as originally planned.
In votes Tuesday, the powerful Mississippi delegation defended a controversial plan to give Northrop Grumman, which owns the Ingalls Shipyard in Pascagoula, perhaps $200 million for hurricane-related losses that its insurers are unwilling to pay.

Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., pressed the bid to strip the provision, saying it's wrong for taxpayers to pay for losses that should be borne by insurers and that Congress should stay out of the battle between the giant defense contractor and its insurers.

But by a 51-48 vote, the Senate supported GOP Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran and former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott -- who grew up in the shadows of the yard -- after they vigorously defended the idea.

Cochran said the shipyard had huge costs not covered by insurance, especially for costs associated with its inability to fulfill contracts after Hurricane Katrina devastated the shipyard. Delays in getting the shipyard back in business would make ships more expensive in the long run, he said.

The first vote Wednesday is slated on a bid by Coburn to strip $11 million from the bill for a flood control project near Sacramento, Calif., that he argues doesn't belong on the emergency measure.