

News From \_\_\_\_\_

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**Byrd to Push for Conclusion to Iraq War Resolution**  
*Senator Says Time to Restore War Powers to Congress*

WASHINGTON, D.C.... This afternoon, U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., announced his intention to offer binding legislation that would bring an end to the 2002 Iraq war resolution based on achievable conditions, not on calendar dates.

The Byrd legislation would make it clear that the U.S. military commitment to Iraq is not open-ended and that the Congress must retake its war powers -- powers that were handed away to presidents without any check or balance in the October 2002 use of force resolution.

Senator Byrd's remarks are below.

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The verdict is in on the President's plan to send more American troops into Iraq. Sixty-eight percent of Americans are opposed to it. Sixty-two percent of active-duty military officers do not support it. Top military leaders have voiced scepticism about whether an increase in troops will succeed in suppressing the sectarian violence that has consumed Iraq. The evidence is in, and the voice of the American people is clear: it is time to turn around.

Unfortunately, this administration seems to have no intention of heeding that call. Last week, the Vice President talked about the "enormous successes" that have been accomplished in Iraq. Enormous successes. The Vice President's definition of enormous success is apparently different than mine. The Vice President said that talk of failures and blunders in Iraq was just "hogwash." And he asserted that, whatever Congress votes on in relation to Iraq, "it won't stop us."

That is a slap in the face to the American people. Our constituents voted for change in

the last election. They asked their elected representatives -- us -- to chart a new course in Iraq. This administration continues to disregard the will of the American people, the good of the nation, and the authority of the Constitution. They believe they can continue to ignore the message that is coming from the American people loud and clear: "bring our sons and daughters home!"

That is why the bipartisan resolutions that we will be debating are so important. We have a duty, as the elected representatives of the people of the United States, to be their voices and to speak the truth. The truth is that sending more American troops into Iraq would be a continuation of the mistakes that brought us there in the first place. The truth is that many of us, in both parties, deeply disagree with the President's decision to increase our commitment in Iraq, rather than decrease it. The truth is that the American people are fed up with having our soldiers caught in the crossfire of a civil war.

It is important to send that message from the people to the President. But it is not enough. The American people are asking us to send a message, but they are also asking us for answers: What is our strategy in Iraq? Why are we there? When can our sons and daughters come home? This President has had almost four years to articulate answers to those questions, and he has unfortunately failed at every opportunity. And so it falls to us to find a way forward out of the mess he has created. That is why I will be introducing within the coming days a resolution that is a new approach to the war: a resolution that is fully supportive of our troops, while laying out clear benchmarks for concluding U.S. military engagement in Iraq.

This administration has claimed that debating the President's plan will undermine the troops. I say that's hogwash. Only 38% of active duty U.S. military forces support sending more troops into Iraq. To imply that the American people and the American troops are somehow incapable of hearing debate about this war is ridiculous. War and the escalation of war is not something to be decided in some backroom corridor, far from the light of day. We have a duty and a responsibility to deliberate, to discuss, and to offer advice. That is the way democracy works, and that is the system established by our founding fathers.

Some have claimed that by putting forward these resolutions we are only offering criticism, not alternatives. But criticism is only the first step: it is critical to send a consensus message to the President that he is moving us in the wrong direction. The next step is to show the President the right direction. That is why my resolution is so important, and why we should be allowed to debate it and vote on it quickly: we must show the President the way forward, in a binding resolution that cannot be ignored.

The American people want a fundamental change in the Administration's policies toward Iraq. The people elected Congress to make those changes. We must demonstrate that the Congress is prepared to take action to compel the President to create a strategy that is not simply more of the same.

Mr. President, the resolution I will be introducing will do exactly that. This resolution reflects the will of the American people that the war in Iraq must be brought to a close in a responsible way. It will establish provisions to bring to a close U.S. military engagement in Iraq based upon conditions, not dates. It will restore to Congress its Constitutional war-making power by adding conditions that would terminate the original 2002 use of force resolution. The conditions can be summarized as follows: we have achieved our objective, we are no longer needed, or we are no longer wanted in Iraq.

These are not irresponsible conditions that would prolong our involvement in Iraq, nor do they require a chaotic or dangerous withdrawal of our troops. These are reasonable conditions that, through the exercise of the Article I, Section 8 powers granted to the Congress, set limits upon the Iraq war resolution, which currently has no sunset provision. That war resolution will continue to be in effect in perpetuity if the Congress does not act. That is an abdication of the responsibility of the Congress to be a steward of its constitutional power to declare war. Additionally, as the bipartisan Iraq Study Group concluded, a clear message must be sent to the Iraqi government that the U.S. commitment to the war in Iraq is not open-ended. The Byrd resolution will point the way toward concluding that commitment.

No Senator must set aside his or her own views of the war in order to support the Byrd resolution. Those who support a rapid redeployment of our troops must realize that the Congress must first reassert the powers vested in this body by Article I of the Constitution. Those who have supported the war, but are now calling for benchmarks for progress by the Iraqi government, should understand that there could be no clearer call for benchmarks for progress than by writing into the law of the land the conditions under which our presence in Iraq will end.

My approach is one that I believe should have wide bipartisan support. At the appropriate time, I will make the necessary motions to place the Byrd joint resolution directly onto the calendar, and I urge that the Senate schedule a debate on this proposal soon after this body completes action on the non-binding resolutions. Although the President believes he can act without the support of the people, the Congress must not submit to such hubris. The work of the Congress must be the work of the people, and there is no more important issue before our country today than finding a way out of the quagmire in Iraq.

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