

News From _____

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**Remarks by Senator Robert C. Byrd
"Stop Holding the Senate Hostage: Debate the Escalation of the War"**

WASHINGTON, D.C.... The U.S. Senate ought to join the rest of the country in debating President Bush's plan for escalating the war in Iraq, U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., said Saturday. Byrd wrapped up debate on the procedural vote, just ahead of the Senate's vote, by challenging the Senate to end its paralysis and move forward with debate on the Iraq war.

Senator Byrd's remarks are below.

Over 3,000 Americans are dead and over 23,000 Americans are wounded as a result of the war in Iraq. Our military leaders say that our armed forces are stretched almost to the breaking point. We have spent almost \$400 billion, and the number continues to rise. But the United States Senate is mired -- incredibly -- in a debate about the ability to even have a debate about our nation's future course in Iraq.

Surely no one in this Senate can be so fearful of debate on a non-binding Resolution concerning the President's plan to send some 40,000 additional troops to Iraq that they fail to hear the voices of over 70% of the American people who now oppose our involvement in that war.

But apparently some in the Senate are afraid of such a debate. Some of my colleagues have indicated they will vote against the motion to proceed to debate on this straightforward resolution, which expresses disagreement with the President's plan. While our brave fighting men and women put their lives on the line in Iraq, the Senate stands paralyzed. The United States Senate -- the greatest deliberative body in the world - - is probably the only place in America where this debate is not taking place!

How can some express unwavering support for the troops if they quake in the face of a debate about their safety? Our troops are stretched thin and weary after deployment and redeployment. Post-traumatic stress disorder and mental problems are rife in the troops. Lost limbs and physical mutilation have scarred many of these young people for life. Scores of families weep every night for their lost loved ones. And yet many in this Senate claim to support the troops while they steadfastly refuse to debate an ill-advised escalation of this war which almost nobody supports.

Can one claim support for the troops while acquiescing in a policy that only sinks our armed forces deeper into a civil war? Can any of us look in the mirror while we stonewall the concerns of the American people and engage in some political fandango to prevent discussion of our engagement in Iraq?

If it will help to bring our soldiers home, I will stand here on the floor of this Senate every day if it would mean one less family without a son, or a daughter, or a mother or father. This is the most important issue facing America, and I stand with my colleagues today to say, enough. Enough stalling, enough obfuscation. It is time for the people of America to know where every Senator stands on this war. I will cast my vote with pride this afternoon in favor of proceeding to this debate, and I hope that every one of my colleagues joins me.

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