

For the last four years, as a member of the Northport Chamber of Commerce, Dorothy has orchestrated Operation Warmth, calling upon the community to donate gently used coats, jackets, gloves and scarves to be distributed to the needy. She has been an integral part of the beautification projects throughout the seasons—bringing her special and tasteful touch to Main Street's outdoor displays.

Madam Speaker, those people who have been lucky enough to know Dorothy and shopped at her store, will miss this special place. We are happy to know that Dorothy will still be in Northport, active in the chamber, her community and her church. Most particularly, Dorothy will be able to have more time for herself and her beloved family. Lucky for us she will still be in Northport. I am grateful to have Dorothy as my friend. I ask that you, and all my colleagues wish Dorothy great success in her next adventure and praise her as a great citizen.

U.S. TROOP READINESS, VETERANS' CARE, KATRINA RECOVERY, AND IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 24, 2007

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2206, the "U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007." I concur in House Amendment No.1 to the Senate Amendment because I believe in doing all we can to support our troops. But I cannot concur in House Amendment No. 2 to the Senate Amendment because there is a limit to the patience of the American people. They have been waiting for more than four years for the Bush Administration to develop a successful policy in Iraq and for the Iraqi Government to take responsibility for the security of the Iraqi people.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us makes emergency supplemental appropriations for the Iraq War and additional supplemental appropriations for agricultural and other emergency assistance for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007.

This emergency supplemental provides \$120 billion primarily for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and for improving the health care for returning soldiers and veterans. It also provides for the continued recovery of the Gulf Coast from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina and fills major gaps in homeland security.

Specifically, the agreement provides \$99.5 billion for the Defense Department for continued military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The legislation includes a \$1 billion increase for the National Guard and Reserve equipment and \$1.1 billion for military housing. The supplemental legislation provides \$3 billion (\$1.2 billion more than the President's request) for the purchase of Mine Resistant Am-

bush Protected Vehicles (MRAP)—vehicles designed to withstand roadside bombs.

Mr. Speaker, included in the bill is \$4.8 billion to ensure that troops and veterans receive the health care that they have earned with their service and another \$6.4 billion to rebuild the Gulf Coast and help the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. There is also emergency funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) totals more than \$650 million. Finally, Homeland security investments total more than \$1 billion, including funds for port security and mass transit security, for explosives detection equipment at airports, and for several initiatives in the 9/11 bill that recently passed the Senate.

Most important, Mr. Speaker, this legislation includes the benchmarks and reporting requirements that were contained in the Warner Amendment in the Senate, which specifies 18 benchmarks for measuring progress by the Iraqi government, including the benchmarks that President Bush laid out on January 10. But they do not include the timelines included in prior versions of the supplemental that Americans approve, support, and demand.

The Warner Amendment requires the President to submit *two reports* to Congress on the progress of the Iraqi government on meeting the 18 benchmarks—one by July 15, 2005 and the second by September 15, 2007. If the President fails to certify progress on each of the 18 benchmarks in the September report, the Iraqi government would lose the economic aid being provided by the United States unless the President exercises his authority to waive the certification requirement in accordance with the procedures set forth in the bill. The amendment also requires *an independent report* from the General Accounting Office by September 1, 2007 on the progress of the Iraqi government in meeting the 18 benchmarks.

Mr. Speaker, in vetoing the previous emergency supplemental, the President claimed it will "undermine our troops and threaten the safety of the American people here at home." Coming from an Administration that has been wrong on every important question relating to the decision to launch the Iraq War as well the conduct of it, this claim is laughable. It is nearly as ridiculous as the President's often stated claim of "progress" in Iraq. The facts, of course, are otherwise.

The U.S. death toll in Iraq reached 83 in just the first 7 days of May—making it the deadliest month of the year and one of the deadliest of the entire war. It is therefore little wonder that nearly 70% of Americans disapprove of the way the President is handling the war. But more important, the President's claim that the Iraq Accountability Act undermines our troops and threatens the safety of the American people here at home is simply not true.

Mr. Speaker, to date, the war in Iraq has lasted longer than America's involvement in World War II, the greatest conflict in all of human history. But there is a difference. The Second World War ended in complete and total victory for the United States and its allies. But then again, in that conflict America was led by FDR, a great Commander-in-Chief, who had a plan to win the war and secure the peace, listened to his generals, and sent troops in sufficient numbers and sufficiently trained and equipped to do the job.

As a result of the colossal miscalculation in deciding to invade Iraq, the loss of public trust resulting from the misrepresentation of the reasons for launching that invasion, and the breath taking incompetence in mismanaging the occupation of Iraq, the Armed Forces and the people of the United States have suffered incalculable damage.

The war in Iraq has claimed the lives of 3,431 brave servicemen and women. More than 25,378 Americans have been wounded, many suffering the most horrific injuries. American taxpayers have paid nearly \$400 billion to sustain this misadventure.

By vetoing the bipartisan Iraq Accountability Act last week, the President vetoed the will of the American people. The President vetoed a responsible funding bill for the troops that would have provided more funding for our troops and military readiness than even the President requested.

By vetoing the Iraq Accountability Act, the President rejected a bill that reflects the will of the American people to wind down this war. By vetoing the Iraq Accountability Act, the President turned a deaf ear to the loud message sent by the American people last November.

That is why I will proudly vote for H.R. 2206. This legislation places the responsibility for bringing peace and security where it clearly belongs and that is squarely on the shoulders of the Iraqi government. The legislation crafted by the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee in consultation with the leadership and the members of the Democratic Caucus moves us closer to the day when we end the misguided invasion, war, and occupation of Iraq. It puts us on the glide path to the day when our troops come home in honor and triumph and where we can "care for him who has borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan."

Mr. Speaker, in passing H.R. 2206, this House will be doing the business and expressing the will of the American people. In the latest CBS News/New York Times poll, 64 percent of Americans favor a timetable that provides for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq in 2008. In the same poll, 57 percent of Americans believe that Congress, not the President, should have the last say when it comes to setting troop levels in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, in passing H.R. 2206, Congress is fulfilling its constitutional responsibilities and exercising the first check on the President's power in six years. As Iraq Study Group Co-Chairman Lee Hamilton has pointed out, "The founders of our nation never envisioned an unfettered president making unilateral decisions about American lives and military power. They did indeed make the president the commander in chief, but they gave to Congress the responsibility for declaring war, for making rules governing our land and naval forces, for overseeing policy, and of course the ability to fund war or to cease funding it."

Mr. Speaker, the President demands a blank check to escalate the war in Iraq against the will of the Congress and the American people. The Constitution does not require it, he certainly has not earned it, and I am not prepared to give it to him. That is why I cannot concur in House Amendment No. 2 to the Senate Amendment. I do concur in House Amendment No. 1 and I urge all members to join me.