

Since Katrina, the program is exacerbated. Of the 669,000 residents of the greater New Orleans area, 125,000 have no form of health insurance. The area lacks an adequate availability of health care providers to deal with delivery of health services. Furthermore, post-Katrina, the area lost 89 percent of its psychiatrists and mental health providers. Amando Lo of the Physicians Resource Group states that, "The city's medical center is hanging on by a thread."

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One possible start towards a remedy of this problem has been offered by the greater New Orleans Health Service Corps. The mission of this program is to sustain and increase access to health care services in the greater New Orleans area by reducing the shortage of critical health care professionals through targeted recruitment and retention strategies. "The program offers a variety of incentives," says Gayla Strahan, the program's coordinator.

One specifically is school loan repayment. However, whereas similar programs under the Public Health Service Act are tax exempt, these are not. Changing this oversight has the potential to greatly effect the decision to come to the region. Drs. Mordaci Potash and Micheala King, recipients of the grant program in the New Orleans area, both say that receiving the grants have been incredibly helpful. However, the taxes to be paid on these grants are a huge burden. Indeed, the taxes they say that are required to be paid are so burdensome they totally undermine the incentive value of the grants altogether, and to such an extent that they are thinking of actually turning down the award and practicing elsewhere. Therefore, one way we can ameliorate the health care problems in our city and the retention and recovery of our health care professionals is to make these grants nontaxable.

Housing is still a dire need in the New Orleans area. There is still an overall shortage of housing since Katrina. Furthermore, most housing that is available is unaffordable to the working class families and the working poor. Greg Rigamer, CEO of GCR & Associates, a group that studies demographics in the area and the economic conditions relating to it, stated that rents have risen 40 percent and the average home selling price has jumped 25 percent.

Earlier this year, Milton Bailey, president of the Louisiana Housing Finance Authority, spoke before the Ways and Means Committee primarily about extending the placed in service date for low-income housing tax credit projects. However, there is so much more that could and needs to be done in this area. Bailey warns if the wording in the tax code relating to credit carryover in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 does not get corrected, the phrasing will stymie the deployment of Go Zone per capita tax credits.

A solution to that would be to re-write or delete that section, section 1400(c)(1)(c) in the Internal Revenue Code. A failure to do this will jeopardize the entire tax credit program, and the entire credit ceiling in any year reduces the credit ceiling, which would greatly hurt the region.

Finally, the current Louisiana Road Home program gives a financial incentive for residents to return to New Orleans. The grants received are to be used to buy or repair homes lost in the storm. However, there is even doubt as to whether these grants are taxable.

Earlier this year, I introduced H.R. 1445, the Tax Free Road Home Act of 2007. This would amend the Internal Revenue Code to exclude from gross income payments to individual taxpayers from the Louisiana Road Home Program for rebuilding or renewing a personal residence. As with the Health Service Corps, we need to have these grants to be tax exempt. Our people have already been through enough, primarily because of the negligence of the Federal Government in designing and constructing our levee system. Requiring them now to pay taxes on recovery moneys is an additional burden they should not have to bear. It is time to get our tax policies right for the Gulf region if we truly want our people to return, our area to recover, and the promises we made to be met.

TIME TO END THE MISTAKEN WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HALL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HALL of New York. Mr. Speaker, a recent CRS report shows that the United States is now spending \$10 billion a month fighting the war in Iraq. That is over \$2.5 billion a week. And what does the American taxpayer get for this \$10 billion a month? An army, nearly broken by repeated deployments; a National Guard that is unwilling and unable to respond to natural disasters or terrorist attacks at home because many of our men and women are in Iraq and most of their equipment is; an escalation in Iraq that has resulted in more death and little reduction in violence; an Iraqi government that is unable to govern; Iraqi Security Forces that refuse to fully stand up.

The war in Iraq costs every man, woman and child in New York's Nineteenth District \$3,077. For over \$3,000 a person, the people of my district have gotten a war that was a strategic mistake and has made them less safe.

Today, the House of Representatives considered another bill for a responsible withdrawal from the war in Iraq. The Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act requires U.S. troops to redeploy from Iraq by April 1, 2008. After 4 years of repeated failure and little accountability, the new Congress is working to repair the damage done to our military and change the direction of this country.

When the President came to Congress to ask for additional funding for the war in Iraq, I established a guiding principle for determining my vote. Any legislation I voted for would have to contain a responsible specific timeline to redeploy U.S. troops out of Iraq. Furthermore, the bill would have to contain benchmarks that would hold the Iraqi government accountable.

Following this principle, I voted four times in 5 months to provide nearly \$100 billion for extra military spending in Iraq and Afghanistan, including extra money to improve our fight against al Qaeda in Afghanistan. These bills also required the Iraqi parliament to meet specific benchmarks to reduce violence and limit sectarian violence. Further, they required the President to follow troop readiness standards established by our own Pentagon. Unfortunately, the President ignored the will of the American people and vetoed the first bill that Congress sent him.

The President blindly insists that America continue down the same path in Iraq. The President's path has left our troops in the middle of Iraq's civil war, weakened U.S. national security, and is devastating our military's ability to fight.

The President refuses to listen to his own State Department's report showing that the Taliban is reemerging as a dominant force in Afghanistan, dramatized by the most recent disheartening sight of young girls being machine-gunned as they left their school, a tactic that is used to try to intimidate parents into not sending their girls to school.

Our men and women in uniform in both Iraq and Afghanistan have performed bravely and worked to achieve every mission their leadership has given them. Our troops have performed heroically in Iraq. But the administration concedes that violence remains high; that the Iraqi government has failed to meet the benchmarks endorsed by the President in January; that political reconciliation is non-existent.

Finally, after years of silence, even President Bush's allies have realized that the current path in Iraq cannot be sustained. Senator DOMENICI says, "There is no reason to wait. I am trying to tell the President that he must change his ways because there is nothing positive happening." And Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER said, "The President needs a new strategy."

It is time our troops had leadership worthy of their service, leadership that will give them achievable missions that improve the security of the American people.

That is why I supported the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act that requires that the President publicly justify the number of troops he needs to carry out post-redeployment missions such as protecting embassy staff, force protection, and fighting international terrorist organizations in Iraq. It is time the American people saw a change in our course.

In the time it has taken me to give this speech, we have spent another roughly \$1 million in Iraq. \$1 million for every 5 minutes we spend in Iraq, for a war that has made us less safe and has weakened our military.

It is time to change our course in Iraq and refocus on the threats in Afghanistan, where the 9/11 attacks were planned and the al Qaeda and the Taliban continue to plot. It is time we end our mistaken war in Iraq.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DISCUSSING THE WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. SUTTON) is recognized for half the time until midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, as the hour grows late here this evening, I and some of my fellow freshmen colleagues have gathered here on the floor to talk about the issue that is overarching everything we do in this country today, the war in Iraq.

When we were elected in November, many of us came here on a mandate for change, a mandate for a change of direction in the way the country was heading and a mandate for change in direction in Iraq. So, tonight we are here to talk about the important events of this day, the action that this House took to pass a very important bill, the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act, and also to talk about the report that was recently released from the White House on Iraq and the benchmarks that, sadly, are not being met.

With that, I would like to actually turn this discussion over to some of my fellow colleagues. We will begin with a statement and some commentary from the gentleman from New Hampshire, the distinguished gentleman from New Hampshire, Mr. PAUL HODES.

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

I am happy to be here tonight with my colleagues to speak about the issue that predominates in the minds of the people of this country, certainly in the minds of my constituents.

We are in a disastrous and unnecessary war in Iraq. I have received literally thousands of letters, phone calls and e-mails from the constituents of the Second District of New Hampshire, the people I represent, the people who sent me to Congress, telling me one thing loud and clear: They want us out of this miserable war. They want our troops out of the impossible trap of being caught in multiple sectarian conflicts.

I have only been in office for 6 months, yet I have received thousands and thousands of communications from the people I represent. It is past time to change course.

Now, when we do change course, and it is inevitable that we will change course, we must do it responsibly and with a view towards ensuring that our core values and our vital national security interests are protected. We are not talking about precipitous withdrawals. Today, when we passed the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act, we made sure that we set a stage for a responsible course for redeployment of our troops, not a precipitous withdrawal.

Day after day, poll after poll, letter after letter, plea after plea, the American people, and certainly the people of New Hampshire, are demanding we bring this war to a responsible end. As we sit here today, we unfortunately are witness to a stunning lack of leadership, a failure of leadership, a failure to face the reality from the Bush administration.

The President's sad and sorry statement today was counterpoint to the mistakes that have been made in the past. In the absence of leadership from the White House, Congress has the duty to pick up the ball. We have the duty to exercise the moral leadership, the courage and the boldness that the American people know will be necessary to forge a responsible and comprehensive strategy to protect our security interests and lead this country back to a place where our military is strong, where our troops are fighting the right fight against al Qaeda, and where the American people's trust is restored in their leadership.

So I am glad to be here tonight, and I yield back to you, Ms. SUTTON.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman for his eloquent words about this very, very tragic subject.

At this point I yield to the gentlewoman from New Hampshire for her comments.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Speaker, it has been 4 years and we are now in our fifth year of war, and once again the Nation stops to assess where are we? And probably the best indicator of where we are was the front page of the Washington Post today.

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The first article, "CIA Said Instability Seemed Irreversible." That is the instability in Iraq.

Second article, "White House Gives Iraq Mixed Marks in Report." Unfortunately, Iraq did not meet any of the benchmarks set by the Bush administration and the Congress.

Third article, "U.S. Warns of Stronger al Qaeda." What we are talking about there is the resurgence of al Qaeda in Pakistan and in Afghanistan where it is no longer safe for girls to go to school once again, and where the drug crop is stronger than ever and where we have made no gains at all. Why haven't we made any gains after 4 years? Because we have been dragged into Iraq, into a war without end, by a President who did not understand the region, who is indifferent to the problems, the cultural differences and the problems they are experiencing, and who has not listened to the world. He has not listened to America, and has not listened to his generals and advisors on this.

Now they are asking us for more time. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, there is nothing that upsets me more than hearing somebody stand and ask for more time after 4 long years; more time for the surge, I heard today, that the surge hasn't had time to work. My question to the gentleman was: Which surge are we talking about? I lose track because we have had so many surges. Which surge are we talking about?

Then they say that the President needs more time. Then I hear General Petraeus needs more time. Always we need more time.

How about this. We have a democracy, a young democracy, the President says, in Iraq, and more than half of the people in that parliament signed a petition asking the United States to leave. Now we said we would leave if another nation like Iraq asked us to leave. And yet we hear absolute silence from the President. He will not leave despite of the fact that the government he had elected there has asked us to leave.

It costs us \$10 billion a month. When I speak to my constituents, they are all asking, why don't we have money have money for this? We need money for health care. We have a problem with infrastructure. And we just don't have the money for this; this program is being cut back. And my answer over and over is what everybody else is having to tell the good people in this country who need our resources, this is what we have to tell them, you can't have two wars, tax cuts for the top 1 percent, the greatest deficits in history, and still provide for the American people.

We have a decision to make. We have an opportunity finally to provide a responsible road map out of Iraq; and yet we have a President and an administration that is indifferent to this road map.