

4,000 Americans who have lost their lives and another 15,000 who were seriously wounded. Unfortunately, presidential leadership has not risen to this same high level of commitment for our soldiers. The Bush administration and their supporters in Congress are responsible for the greatest foreign policy disaster in American history and today their failed policies will be financed with debt for another year.

Today, I will oppose continuing to fund the Iraq War as I have in the past. This war is not making America safer, but it is weakening our military capacity, exhausting our troops and undermining our Nation's economic security. It is time to invest in America and the needs of the American people. I am appalled by the stories about defense contractors engaging in war profiteering, corrupt Iraqi officials fueling the sectarian divide, and reconstruction projects financed by the American people left unfinished or unused because of poor planning.

Now in the sixth year of the Iraq War, America is seeing the conflict in Afghanistan, the heart of the war on terror, grow more intense as the Taliban resurges. My support for the on-going U.S. effort in Afghanistan remains strong. I was in Afghanistan and Pakistan in March and the threats posed by the Taliban and al-Qaeda in those countries are real. It is tragic that the Bush administration's deception and failed policy in Iraq has taken the focus off of al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Mr. Speaker, despite the failings and costly mistakes made by the Bush administration, the Democratic leadership in Congress is giving this Nation hope that the Iraq War will come to an end and that Washington will once again invest in the needs of the American people. Yet, the Bush administration rejects any spending on domestic priorities that will benefit the American people.

Look around our country. Healthcare is in crisis. America's infrastructure is deteriorating and collapsing—as we've seen with the 1-35W bridge in Minneapolis. With oil prices reaching \$125 per barrel there is still no significant federal investment in a massive expansion of renewable energy research, development and implementation. The list is long and it is the result of absolute neglect to invest in America by the Bush Administration and a Republican Congress that together led this nation from 2001 through 2006.

Democrats have new priorities for America and some of those priorities are clearly reflected in H.R. 2642. This bill provides a significant investment in those men and women who have served our country and deserve our gratitude and our support. H.R. 2642 restores GI education benefits to the veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars to help ensure their future success and our economic recovery. The cost of providing four-year college scholarships for our veterans for an entire year is less than we spend in one day in Iraq, and helps to change our mission from squandering tax dollars in Iraq towards investing in America.

The Majority has also responded to the economic crisis facing too many families by including extended unemployment benefits for workers who have exhausted the 26 weeks of regular benefits. The U.S. economy has lost 260,000 jobs in the last four months, and 1.35 million workers have been unemployed longer than 26 weeks. This extension will provide relief for the over 4 million Americans, including

nearly 70,000 Minnesotans, who are struggling to find a job, and help to stimulate the economy in a cost-effective, fast-acting way. To ensure that states and hospitals can continue to provide health care services for our most vulnerable, this bill includes a rejection of the Bush Administration's proposed regulations to slash federal funding from Medicaid.

H.R. 2642 gives relief to a growing global crisis by providing \$1.6 billion in emergency international food aid. Food assistance is desperately needed by the millions of families facing hunger and starvation this year due to rising food prices, natural disasters, economic downturns, and conflict situations. This is a moral and humanitarian response to end suffering around the world and is also a positive step the United States can take to restore our reputation in the international community.

Democrats will also try once again to change the policy and mission in Iraq. An amendment I support will require redeployment out of Iraq by December 2009, require that Iraqis contribute to the cost of their reconstruction, require that our military does not pay more for fuel than the Iraqis, requires additional training and rest for our soldiers and would finally and explicitly prohibit torture. Unfortunately, the Administration continues to oppose these common-sense, responsible policies to keep our troops safe, reduce the burden on the American taxpayer, and repair our standing in the world.

America needs a new direction—in Iraq and at home. Democrats are fighting to end the war responsibly, to reduce the debt burden on our children and grandchildren, and to reinvest in our future.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose this most recent war funding appropriation brought before the Congress. While I cannot in good conscience provide the President with any additional funds that would continue this disastrous war well into the next president's administration, I do support Amendment #2, which attaches conditions to the war funding and would hold the President accountable. I also support Amendment #3, which would honor our veterans and provide desperately needed humanitarian funds to people both here and abroad.

As I have said before, the American people sent a clear message to the Congress on November 7, 2006: We must end the war in Iraq. In the ensuing months, the calls for withdrawal have only increased. A recent ABC News/Washington Post poll shows that 57 percent of Americans believe that the United States should withdraw its military forces from Iraq to avoid further U.S. military casualties, even if it means that civil order is not restored there.

Unfortunately, we stand here today, no closer to responding to the demands of the American people. This development frustrates me to no end and I know it frustrates the American people. Yet, it also strengthens my resolve to press harder for the outcome this country needs.

The ultimate, unequivocal authority of the Congress is the power of the purse. We must use it. The only way to truly support our troops is take them out of harm's way. The American people understand that marching ahead blindly into oblivion is anything but supporting our troops.

The longer this war drags on, the more its effects are felt in our communities and homes. Last year, the citizens of Detroit spent \$231.3 million to fund the war in Iraq. With those same funds, the Congress could have provided healthcare for 172,984 children. Even when faced with historically high food prices, a crumbling infrastructure, and the subprime mortgage crisis, the Administration continues to demand that the American people continue to pour billions of their taxpayer dollars into an unwinnable war. The priorities of this Administration could not be any more misplaced.

Of course, appeals to reason fall on deaf ears with this President. In an interview this week, President Bush was asked about the worst that could happen if the U.S. were to pull out of Iraq next year. The President responded: "The doomsday scenario of course is that extremists throughout the Middle East would be emboldened, which would eventually lead to another attack on the United States."

The President's overreliance on the tired rhetoric of fear, unchanged after five years of bloody occupation, exemplifies how intellectually bankrupt the justifications for his war policies have become.

Mr. Speaker, this lame duck President cannot scare the Congress and the American people into continuing his war. We know that it is the presence of our troops on the street corners of Basra and Fallujah that lures extremists to Iraq. We know that it is the unintentional desecration of holy sites, like the Golden Dome of Samarra, that inspires outrage in the hearts of young men throughout the Middle East and makes America more susceptible to another terrorist attack.

There is only one sensible way forward in Iraq. If the Congress acts this day to cut off funding for the war or to impose a timetable for withdrawal, we can begin the immediate phased drawdown of American troops and conclude it within 18 months. Such redeployment does not constitute "cutting and running." Instead, it offers the only hope for a diplomatic solution to the civil war raging inside of Iraq. With 160,000 troops in Iraq, Washington lacks the leverage on its own to push the Maliki government to take meaningful steps to accommodate Sunni concerns and thereby empower Sunni moderates. Similarly, the U.S. presence in Iraq allows the rest of the world to avoid responsibility for stability in and around Iraq, even as everyone realizes the stakes involved. Only a plan to draw down U.S. forces, coupled with a robust diplomatic surge, will prompt Middle Eastern states, European governments, and the United Nations to be more constructive and proactive in working to salvage stability in the Persian Gulf.

I came to Washington 43 years ago on a platform of Jobs, Justice, and Peace. Because it is my firm belief that we will never achieve peace in Iraq as long as this war continues, I cannot support a supplemental funding bill that allows a politically unaccountable President to continue an unwinnable conflict. Enough is enough.