



Hon. Doris O. Matsui

Member of Congress

Doris O. Matsui

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Matsui Announces Support for a Timetable to End the War in Iraq

"Congress faces a choice between setting a timetable to bring the troops home and allowing the Administration to continue to operate with a free hand; between a plan to end the war and a status quo that envisions war without end. I believe Congress must choose the former."

– Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui

Washington, DC - Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-05) delivered remarks on the floor of the House of Representatives supporting Congressional Democrats' timetable to end the war in Iraq. The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007 (H.R. 1591) supports the battlefield needs of our troops who are fighting in Iraq while enacting a fixed timetable to bring them home.

Congresswoman Matsui's floor statement (as prepared for delivery):

"This Congress is on the cusp of a historic first step to changing our Iraq policy: enacting a fixed timetable to bring our troops home. The bill made in order under this rule is not the bill I would have written. But it deserves our support because it will bring a critical change of direction in Iraq after four long years of mismanagement.

"I opposed this war from the beginning, and I believe we must bring our troops home soon and in a responsible way. Our men and women in uniform have done everything we have asked of them. They have endured multiple deployments and extended separation from their loved ones. They have followed orders into combat often without the proper body armor or equipment.

"These are signs of an inexcusable lack of leadership from the President. However, rather than change direction, the President has chosen to send tens of thousands of additional troops to Iraq. This goes against the advice of his generals, against the advice of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, and against the expressed wishes of the voters.

"The President's reckless insistence on sticking to a failed policy in Iraq underlines the need for Congress to show leadership. This legislation gives us the chance, for the first time, to take a concrete step towards bringing the war to a close.

"I support Congress taking firm steps to change our nation's direction in Iraq. I have cosponsored legislation to establish a timetable for redeployment of our troops. And today, we

have the chance to enact that timetable into binding legislation. That's an historic opportunity for Congress to show the necessary leadership.

“The decision comes down to this – do we want to enact a bill that has flaws but does contain a fixed timetable to bring our troops home? Or do we want to vote down the fixed timetable and endorse President Bush's ability to continue to wage this war without any limits?”

“This bill does not go as far or as fast as I would like. I support bringing our troops home on a faster timetable than provided for in this legislation. I also strongly believe the President should not be allowed to waive the legislation's troop readiness requirements. Because of his gross mismanagement of the conflict, I believe the President has abdicated the right to any such deference.

“Having said that, after weeks of difficult negotiations, it has become clear that this is the most aggressive approach that can obtain the necessary votes to pass the House of Representatives. That is disappointing to me, but that is the reality here. This is, after all, the legislative branch. That means we can't change the policy if we can't pass the bill.

“Enacting a fixed timetable to bring our troops home is a very significant leap forward in our Iraq policy, and one which will provide a foundation for further action and increase pressure on the President. There is a reason President Bush and his congressional allies are strongly opposed to this legislation, as defeating this bill would play into the President's hands. It would ultimately result in passage of an even less satisfactory bill – one that would impose even fewer demands on the President and lack any withdrawal timetable whatsoever. And it would be used by the President, his Administration, and his allies to assert that they have been given a free hand by the Congress to pursue the war however and for as long as they see fit. It is unacceptable to me to give the President a blank check to mismanage the war as he chooses.

“Ultimately, Congress faces a choice between setting a timetable to bring the troops home and allowing the Administration to continue to operate with a free hand; between a plan to end the war and a status quo that envisions war without end. I believe Congress must choose the former. This legislation, whatever its flaws, enacts a timetable to bring our troops home while giving them the resources they need for protection while they are still in harm's way. For that reason, it has my support.”

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