

Republicans Politicize Iraq Debate Matsui Calls for Open Debate on Policy

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gave the following statement on Rep. Hunter's (R-CA) resolution to withdraw immediately our nation's troops from Iraq. Additionally, rather than encouraging a debate on this country's Iraq policy, the Committee on Rules reported out a rule, which on average will only allow each member to 7.8 seconds to discuss what is a very complex issue. "The U.S. House of Representatives is sinking to a new low today. "What is happening on the floor is not intended to be an open and honest debate on our policy in Iraq. It is about the politics of personal destruction – a swift-boat attack by Congressional Republicans on a 37-year veteran of the Marine Corps for giving his honest assessment about the situation in Iraq. "Republicans will try to claim – falsely – that this is about an idea, not a person – but everyone here in this room – whether or not they will admit it – knows the truth of what is going on today. "This is about changing the subject and dodging responsibility. House Republicans are exposed and embarrassed by the Senate's recent vote to demand benchmarks from the White House. The President refuses to level with the American people on Iraq, or present his ideas, and apparently House Republicans are of the same mind. They would rather tear someone down. "Our troops – putting their lives on the line – deserve better from this country. Today is clearly not about these brave men and women. They deserve an actual debate on this nation's Iraq policy – that is a debate I would welcome, our troops would welcome and our constituents would welcome. Sadly, today is about political attacks. "Jack Murtha is one of the most respected members of the U.S. Congress on U.S. military policy – an expertise he has built from his first-hand knowledge of military and defense issues. He is a 37-year veteran of the Marine Corps, who retired at the rank of colonel in 1990. He is one of the most respected members of the U.S. Congress on the U.S. military, on a bipartisan basis. "To question Jack Murtha's commitment – his patriotism to this nation – or our troops is ludicrous. No one has been as devoted as Jack to our men and women in the military – he's made weekly visits to Walter Reed, visits to Iraq and has poured over the Defense Department's own assessments of the situation on the ground in Iraq. "I will vote against the GOP's characterization of Congressman Murtha's opinions on Iraq, because I cannot support personal, political attacks and I believe that we should have a free and open debate on this issue.###