



Statement on the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act

Washington, DC - Congressman John D. Dingell (D-MI15) entered the following remarks into the record on H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, which passed the House today, 223-201:

“Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2956, legislation that would dramatically shift American policy in Iraq.

“Five years ago I voted against authorizing the President to invade and occupy Iraq. At the time, I did not believe that the President made a persuasive case that Saddam Hussein was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction or that he was on the verge of giving them to terrorists. I did not believe that Iraq was the central front in the War on Terror. And I did not think that this Administration had a plan to rebuild the country after the war.

“Tragically, I was proven correct on all of these points. Five years later, our military has sustained 26,000 dead or wounded. We have spent over \$500 billion. The lowest estimate of Iraqi civilian deaths puts that number at an incredible 60,000, and two million more Iraqis are refugees scattered throughout the region.

“Despite all of this, our President refuses to change course. In fact, after commissioning a bi-partisan study of the situation in Iraq, he ignored their findings, reneged on diplomacy, and sent 30,000 more soldiers to sacrifice for a muddled mission.

“It is time for a change. It is obvious to everyone who does not live at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue that the situation in Iraq will only change when we take diplomacy seriously, put pressure on the Iraqi government, and when we change the mission of our military from offensive operations to training and counter-terrorism.

“That is what Chairman Skelton’s legislation does, and I am proud to support it. This bill is a well reasoned approach to an intractable problem. The United States cannot keep most of its military tied up in Iraq indefinitely. For my friends on the other side of the aisle, who like to style themselves friends of the military, I ask you, “How can we ensure a functioning military, one capable of meeting multiple threats, if we are breaking them in Iraq?”

“Nor can we withdraw from Iraq at a moment’s notice without putting our troops in the theater at greater risk and destabilizing the entire region. I served in this institution when Saigon fell, and a disorderly exit led to a humanitarian disaster in Vietnam and precipitated genocide in Cambodia.

“This bill brings a welcome change in direction but does so in a way that will enable our military to exit safely and with honor. It will put pressure on the Iraqi government, so that they know that we will not be their perpetual security blanket. It will keep the fight on Al Qaeda and other terrorists, and will force political compromises where sectarian bloodshed now exists.

“This legislation is the best way forward. I believe it is our moral obligation to support it.”