

Washington, D.C. - Congressman David Price (D-NC) addressed the House of Representatives today in support of a bill to initiate an exit from Iraq beginning within 120 days of enactment, requiring full redeployment of U.S. troops by April 2008.

The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act ([H.R. 2956](#)) would also require the President to develop a comprehensive strategy for managing the redeployment and the challenges that Iraq will continue to present after U.S. troops are gone. The House passed the bill this afternoon by a vote of 223-201.

Price, who voted against the authorization of the war in Iraq, is a longtime opponent of President Bush's war strategy, and he has been calling for a responsible exit for two years. In his speech Price appealed to his colleagues to recognize that the current U.S. policy is not serving our national interest.

View the video of Congressman Price's remarks, followed by the prepared text of his speech.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2956, which would compel a responsible exit of U.S. troops from Iraq.

I voted against giving the President the authority to go to war in Iraq. Two years ago, Brad Miller and I introduced legislation to terminate the authorization and require of the President a comprehensive exit strategy. The President has responded to calls for change by stubbornly adhering to a failed strategy that has cost our nation severely, in blood, treasure, and moral authority. He has rejected Congress's constitutional role in determining policy and he has ignored the will of the American people. This obstinate, irresponsible, destructive course cannot continue.

The President has repeatedly pointed to the surge of U.S. forces, begun six months ago, as a tide-turning event. But the surge seems mainly to have shifted the locus of the fighting, improving security in some areas while pushing violence into others.

The intent of the surge was to create space for Iraq's political leaders to make the hard choices that will lead their country forward. But those hard choices are not being made, and we can no longer leave our foreign policy at the mercy of sectarian and political forces we cannot control.

Our troops are simply biding time in Iraq – but they are doing so at great cost in terms of lives and resources. A mission of biding time is not one that we, as policymakers, can or should support. We must begin to bring our troops home.

Yet, as I and many others have repeatedly argued, it not only matters that we leave Iraq, it also matters greatly how we leave.

There will be serious consequences for the people of Iraq whether we stay or go. When our troops leave, there is a risk of increased sectarian violence and ethnic cleansing – though the violence of the past several years has left many neighborhoods and regions in Iraq already largely purged of sectarian diversity. And it is uncertain how terrorist groups will fare after we depart; they may become more entrenched or our absence may undermine their support. We must have a plan for managing all of the potential consequences.

We cannot afford the same mistakes leaving this war that the administration made entering it, without a plan for protecting troops, managing consequences, and giving the Iraqi people every possible chance to succeed.

For that reason, the legislation before us requires President Bush to develop a comprehensive strategy for managing the redeployment and the challenges that Iraq will continue to present after our troops are gone.

This bill would provide the discipline of a timeline to the Bush Administration for beginning and completing the termination of combat operations and the redeployment of our troops. It also would engage the leading minds in our military, intelligence and diplomatic communities to chart the best way forward.

Mr. Speaker, some persist in suggesting that a withdrawal would somehow be a defeat for the United States. But this is simply the wrong way of looking at this very complex situation. Our goal must be to maximize U.S. national security, and we cannot afford to define that in static terms based on goals established at the outset of the conflict that were at best naive.

The continued presence of 160,000 American troops in Iraq is not sustainable and does not serve our national interest. It is time not merely to urge but to require a change in course, and this legislation offers us the chance to do just that.

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