

**Washington, D.C.** - Congressman David Price (NC-04) spoke today on the floor of the House of Representatives in support of a House bill that will establish a time frame for ending the U.S. occupation of Iraq, and in the meantime will push the Iraqis to reconcile their differences and provide for their own defense. He urged his colleagues to consider the moral dimensions of their vote on the bill, which he considers "the best chance we may have for a long time to compel a change of course in Iraq." The text of Price's speech, as delivered, follows below.

Price is a Member of the House Appropriations Committee, which drafted the bill, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act. The bill passed the House by a vote of 218-212, with 1 Member voting present.

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#### ON THE EXERCISE OF CONSCIENCE IN THIS VOTE

Time Stamp: 10:49 am

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill as chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, advocating for its acceleration of programs critical to the integrity of our borders and the safety of the American people

Today, however, I want to address the broader bill, speaking colleague to colleague, mindful and respectful of the struggles with conscience so evident among us in recent days.

I did not support originally giving the authority to the President to wage war in Iraq, and I have introduced legislation calling for an end to that authority.

But I understand there is a wide range of opinion on where we should go from here, and there

are many who believe that this bill, which takes a major step toward changing our course in Iraq, either goes too far or not far enough.

Our discussions on this issue have brought to mind lessons from my days in divinity school and as a teacher of ethics – lessons that I believe are helpful in sorting out what it means and should mean to follow one's conscience on a matter such as this.

On the first day of Ethics 101, we learn that we often face two kinds of moral choice in life. One has to do with the morality of an act itself, which is what many colleagues are referring to when they say they are "voting their conscience" on what we know is an imperfect bill.

The second kind of moral choice requires us to consider the consequences of our acts. That is also an exercise of conscience, perhaps an even more demanding one.

Think about the consequences. What if a consequence of voting "no" is to let slip away the best chance we may have for a long time to compel a change of course in Iraq? What if a consequence is the further crippling of this House's influence on the country's foreign and defense policy? What if a consequence of a "no" vote is to allow the President to continue on the same failed policy course? Are those not matters of conscience?

Some talk as though we should simply square the contents of the bill against an ideal and vote accordingly. No, I'm afraid moral choice and our obligations as public servants run deeper than that.

Please, don't sell short a vote in favor of this bill, as though it were a mere practical or political accommodation. By all means, treat this vote as an act of conscience, but an act based upon a searching consideration of the full range of consequences that may result.

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