

Joins With Miller in Introducing Joint Resolution Today

Washington, D.C. - Today, US Rep. David Price (NC-04) and US Rep. Brad Miller (NC-13), outspoken critics of the Bush Administration's handling of Iraq, have introduced a joint resolution, directing the President to submit a detailed plan to Congress for ending the occupation of that country, including a near-term initial drawdown of US troops.

Price and Miller are making remarks on the House floor, citing today's ratification of the constitutional referendum as "an opportunity that [the United States] must seize."

Price will explain that..."while we should never have started this war...and although no ideal option for ending it is available to us now, the October 15 referendum vote offers the best opportunity we are likely to have to begin the process of withdrawal credibly and hopefully – to turn the responsibility for Iraq's future over to the Iraqis themselves and to repair the diplomacy and foreign policy from which the invasion of Iraq has been such a tragic departure for our country."

Among other things, the Price-Miller resolution recognizes the valor of US troops, faults the President for poor planning, and affirms the significance of the passing of the constitutional referendum.

Price-Miller also calls for the President to accelerate the training of Iraqi security forces and submit a detailed plan to Congress on the remaining goals of the United States mission and the means for achieving them.

The full text of Price's remarks follows:

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Price-Miller resolution, which we have introduced today, to require the President to submit to Congress a plan for the withdrawal of United States troops from Iraq in the wake of the October 15 constitutional referendum, beginning with an initial

drawdown.

This is not a requirement I propose lightly. As many in this Chamber and in my home State know, I have been an outspoken critic of the Bush administration's policies in Iraq, and I voted against giving the President authority to invade Iraq, regarding it as an abdication of congressional responsibility.

I have supported funding for troops in the field and for Iraqi reconstruction, while calling for an exit strategy, including benchmarks to which the administration should be held accountable and major policy changes that would increase the probability of achieving at least some of our goals.

But there is no evidence that President Bush has heeded anyone who does not accept his glib assurances and his stay-the-course rhetoric. As a result, the mistakes that have marred this effort from the beginning, poor or nonexistent planning, for example, and weak international participation, have been compounded.

Such failures must not become a rationale for extending our occupation of Iraq. In fact, our presence itself is a target of the insurgents and a magnet for international terrorists. And it may be encouraging some elements of the Iraqi leadership to defer essential decisions and compromises that are necessary if their country is to assume responsibility for its own future.

So we must leave. How we leave does matter: in a way that spares the lives of American troops and Iraqi noncombatants, in a way that minimizes the chance that Iraq will descend into massacres, ethnic cleansing or civil war, and in a way that maximizes the chances for Iraqi self-defense and self-government.

But we must end the occupation, and the approval of the Constitution offers us an opportunity to begin that process. It is an opportunity we must seize. There are no guarantees in this enterprise. Iraq could rise to this challenge with the Kurds and the Shia more fully accommodating the essential interests of Sunnis in changes to the Constitution early next year, based on input from a newly elected Sunni Parliament after December. Or Iraq could further descend into sectarian violence.

Our country cannot absolve ourselves of responsibility for creating this quagmire, or for helping avoid the worst-case possibilities going forward. But we must understand, and the President must tell the world we understand, that a sustained American military presence is not part of the solution. It is not feasible, in some ways it exacerbates the difficulties, and it must be ended.

Our resolution draws in concept and content on one introduced in the Senate by Mr. Feingold on June 14. It updates that resolution by taking explicit account of the constitutional referendum and proposing an initial immediate drawdown of troops.

Mr. Speaker, we should never have started this war. We should have and could have utilized other means of containing and controlling whatever threat Saddam Hussein represented. No ideal option is available to us now in ending it. But the October 15 vote offers the best opportunity we are likely to have to begin the process of withdrawal credibly and hopefully: to turn the responsibility for Iraq's future over to the Iraqis themselves and to repair the diplomacy and foreign policy from which the invasion of Iraq has been such a tragic departure for our country.

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