

It's Time to Win the War on Terror

First Published on April 1, 2007 in the Palm Beach Post

Last week, I delivered on one of my promises when I voted to get the Bush Administration refocused on winning the War on Terror.

America removed a brutal dictator and through \$400 billion of your hard earned money and our brave men and women's blood sweat and tears, we have given the Iraqi people the hope of a better life through democracy.

Now is the time for the Iraqi people to stand up. It is their country. It is their children's future. For the first time in over four years the Iraqi government has a date by which they must be accountable for their own security. Our efforts must be focused on destroying Al Qaeda, the Taliban and terror networks throughout the world. We must bring Osama bin Laden to justice. We must let Syria and Iran know that we are resolute in our mission and we will hold them accountable.

I came to my decision after briefings with the generals, the Secretaries of State and Defense and the President's staff. I have spoken to our soldiers and their loved ones. I have conferred with returning veterans. I have been to Walter Reed Hospital and met with our wounded. I have spoken with Lee Hamilton and considered the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group and the 9/11 Commission. The conclusion was inescapable; the Sunni and Shia are engaged in a bloody religious civil war and our troops should not be put in harm's way by being asked to be the local cop on the beat. While our presence may temporarily reduce the violence, we will never be able to change their hearts.

The House-passed bill is not a withdrawal from Iraq but it is an end to America's participation in Iraq's religious civil war. The President can continue to deploy troops in Iraq as long as he wants, provided they are fighting terrorists, training Iraqi security forces, and providing diplomatic protection, not nation building and not police work.

The emergency spending supplemental gives the President all the money he asked for and more. We increased funding for our troops in Afghanistan as they prepare for a spring offensive by a resurgent Taliban. We stepped up and made sure our returning soldiers had the money to get the best medical care available and we increased funding for our veterans. We also provided the military the money needed to buy the equipment necessary to rebuild our army and get our troops combat ready.

Finally, my vote exercises my constitutional responsibility to hold the President accountable to the American people for the promises he made to us when he chose to go to war in Iraq. After more than four years of mismanagement and broken promises, it would be unwise to give the Administration another blank check.

An emergency supplemental bill it just that, it provides funding for all of America's emergencies including the Iraq War. Don't let politicians interested in winning back political power confuse the issue; Congress acted responsibly by increasing funding for veterans, by purchasing avian flu vaccine to protect our children and by taking care of farmers on the brink of bankruptcy. I would like to see those same politicians tell a citrus grower going broke, or a veteran waiting months to get an appointment, or a parent with a sick child that they are "pork projects."

I am proud that I voted to make America safer. I am proud to have sent Osama bin Laden a message that America is committed to winning the War on Terror and that we are no longer willing to allow a religious civil war to sap our strength. I am proud to stand with our soldiers and our veterans and I am proud to represent the people of Florida's 16th Congressional District.

Congressman Tim Mahoney

Florida's 16th Congressional District