

Mahoney, Blue Dogs Applaud Chairman Skelton for Demanding Fiscal Accountability in Iraq

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Washington, D.C. - Tuesday, Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16) joined other members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition at a press conference with House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton on the upcoming Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization bill and the need for fiscal accountability in Iraq.

The Blue Dog Coalition applauded Chairman Skelton for including key provisions of H.Res.97 in the Defense Authorization bill. H.Res.97 was previously introduced by Blue Dog members and calls for transparency in how Iraq war funds are spent. Specifically, the Defense Authorization bill addresses the lack of oversight and accountability in the war by requiring that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report every six months on the handling of contracts in Iraq. In addition, Blue Dog members applauded the inclusion of measures in the Defense Authorization bill which establish essential management goals for the Department of Defense and expand the authority of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction to include all reconstruction funding regardless of source or fiscal year.

"By including these Blue Dog-sponsored provisions in the Defense Authorization bill, Chairman Skelton has demonstrated a firm commitment to restoring fiscal accountability and responsibility to the government's funding of the war in Iraq," said Rep. Mike Ross (D-AR), Blue Dog Co-Chair for Communications. "I encourage all members of Congress to embrace this goal and vote for passage of the Defense Authorization bill this week."

Congressman Tim Mahoney said, "Regardless of where each American stands on the war, one thing for sure is that each American expects that this Congress inspect how their hard earned tax dollars are being spent. As of January 2005, the Special Inspector General for Iraq reported that \$9 billion dollars in Iraq Reconstruction funds are missing due to inefficiencies and bad management. The American people deserve better. We owe them accountability. They need to know that their money is being used wisely to protect our troops on the ground instead of being lost to waste and fraud."

This action taken by Chairman Skelton and members of the Blue Dog Coalition comes on the heels of a damaging report issued by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction detailing continued and egregious abuses in the government's funding of the war in Iraq. Inadequate facilities and non-functioning equipment built by highly paid contractors, insufficient monitoring of government contracts, and billions of dollars unaccounted for due to inefficiencies and bad management are just a few of the examples of waste, fraud, and abuse detailed in the report.

The fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition was formed in 1995 with the goal of representing the center of the House of Representatives and appealing to the mainstream values of the American public. The Blue Dogs are dedicated to a core set of beliefs that transcend partisan politics, including a deep commitment to the financial stability and national security of the United States. Currently there are 43 members of the Blue Dog Coalition. For more information, visit the Blue Dog website at <http://www.house.gov/ross/BlueDogs/>.