

House Appropriations Committee Approves Spending Bill with Chem Plant Security Provision

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As Iraq War Enters 5th Year, Rothman Says Congress Should End U.S. Combat Role in Iraq's Civil War and Pass Supplemental

(Washington, DC)—As the Iraq War enters its fifth year, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) says that the Iraq spending bill passed by the House Appropriations Committee last Thursday sets long-overdue changes in course for the Administration's failing policy. The full House is expected to vote on the bill later this week and Rothman, a member of the vocal Out of Iraq Caucus, urges his colleagues to support it.

"The spending bill that I voted for last week ends the war and that's why I voted for it. I wish the bill would call for the immediate withdrawal of our troops, but it is an important step forward and I urge my colleagues to support it. More than 3,200 U.S. troops have given their lives, more than 23,000 are wounded, and our taxpayers have spent more than \$400 billion so that the Iraqis can have a chance to live together in peace. We've trained over 350,000 Iraqi soldiers and special forces. Now, it is up to the Iraqi people to decide to end their civil war — our military cannot do that for them," said Rothman.

The spending bill Rothman referenced was passed by the House Appropriations Committee by a vote of 36 to 28 on Thursday, March 15th. It requires the redeployment all U.S. troops out of Iraq by August 2008 at the latest. U.S. troops could be redeployed sooner if Iraqis fail to meet the benchmarks that President Bush laid out in his January 2007 speech announcing his escalation of the war.

Additionally, the bill includes a provision written by Rothman with the Committee that prevents the federal government from weakening New Jersey's tough security regulations for chemical plants, which are known terrorist targets. In Committee, Rothman successfully fought back an attempt by Rep. John Culberson (R-TX) to remove the provision and allow the federal government to preempt New Jersey's chemical security laws. Culberson claimed his amendment was about saving jobs in his state, but Rothman disagreed, saying:

"Mr. Chairman, and my colleagues, let me tell you what this is about. Al Qaeda has targeted the United States and its people for death. They told us that there are certain places that are more likely to be hit than others. I happen to represent portions of the State of New Jersey, which al Qaeda has identified as one of its highest [priority] targets.

"We have an alley of chemical plants, which is recognized throughout the world as one of the most intensive and most dangerous places for terrorist attacks that could result in the deaths of tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people. So the State of New Jersey, in a bipartisan way, said 'we want to increase the standards of safety and security of the chemical plants in our state. Not your state, in our state.'

"But the federal government is going to tell New Jersey that it can't protect its citizens? So you're telling me that you're against states' rights and you're against the state that wants to protect its own citizens from al Qaeda? I don't think so. This is not about people losing their jobs in your state. You don't have to pass these laws. We, on a bipartisan basis in New Jersey, have passed these laws to protect our people from al Qaeda. Allow us to protect ourselves."

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