

Vote for the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act

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On Thursday, March 15, 2007, the House Appropriations Committee voted on a supplemental spending bill to fund, with conditions, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as emergency improvements needed in veterans' health care and troop readiness. Congressman Steve Rothman's (D-NJ) statement from yesterday on his vote in favor of the bill follows:

"The most important thing about this bill is that it 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 there are not the votes in the Democratic Party and certainly not in the Republican Party to accomplish that objective.

"Titled the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act, the legislation I voted on today, which was passed in the House Appropriations Committee with nearly unanimous Democratic support (and without a single Republican vote), calls for the withdrawal of all U.S. combat troops as early as January 2008, but no later than August 31, 2008. The timeframe for withdrawal depends on the Iraqi government's ability to make progress on President Bush's own military and political benchmarks for success.

"The bill also requires the U.S. Department of Defense to honor its own standards for troop readiness, training, and equipment before sending our soldiers into battle; and provides billions more for veterans and military health care, including hundreds of millions for the treatment of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injuries, as well as much-needed emergency monies for U.S. homeland security.

"The U.S. House of Representatives is expected to take up this matter on the House floor next week. Today's vote by the House Appropriations Committee, I believe, accurately expresses the feeling of most Americans and most House Members that we must begin redeploying U.S. troops to prevent the President from keeping our brave men and women in middle of the Iraqi civil war indefinitely.

"Unfortunately, today the U.S. Senate, in several votes, demonstrated that they do not yet have the votes needed to pass any bill that sets a timetable for U.S. withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Coupled with that, President Bush has threatened to veto the House bill on the grounds that it ties his hands in the prosecution of the War and sets a date by which U.S. combat forces must be out of Iraq."

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