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The Upcoming Iraq War Funding Bill

The \$124 billion supplemental appropriation is a good bill to oppose. I am pleased that many of my colleagues will join me in voting against this measure.

If one is unhappy with our progress in Iraq after four years of war, voting to de-fund the war makes sense. If one is unhappy with the manner in which we went to war, without a constitutional declaration, voting no makes equally good sense.

Voting no also makes the legitimate point that the Constitution does not authorize Congress to direct the management of any military operation-- the president clearly enjoys this authority as Commander in Chief.

But Congress just as clearly is responsible for making *policy*, by debating and declaring war, raising and equipping armies, funding military operations, and ending conflicts that do not serve our national interests.

Congress failed to meet its responsibilities four years ago, unconstitutionally transferring its explicit war power to the executive branch. Even though the administration started the subsequent pre-emptive war in Iraq, Congress bears the greatest responsibility for its lack of courage in fulfilling its duties. Since then Congress has obediently provided the funds and troops required to pursue this illegitimate war.

We won't solve the problems in Iraq until we confront our failed policy of foreign interventionism. This latest appropriation does nothing to solve our dilemma. Micromanaging the war while continuing to fund it won't help our troops.

Here's a new approach: Congress should admit its mistake and repeal the authority wrongfully given to the executive branch in 2002. Repeal the congressional sanction and disavow presidential discretion in starting wars. Then start bringing our troops home.

If anyone charges that this approach does not support the troops, take a poll. Find out how reservists, guardsmen, and their families--many on their second or third tour in Iraq--feel about it.

The constant refrain that bringing our troops home would demonstrate a lack of support for them must be one of the most amazing distortions ever foisted on the American public. We're so concerned about saving face, but whose face are we saving? A sensible policy would save American lives and follow the rules laid out for Congress in the Constitution—and avoid wars that have no purpose.

The claim that it's unpatriotic to oppose spending more money in Iraq must be laid to rest as fraudulent.

We should pass a resolution that expresses congressional opposition to any more undeclared, unconstitutional, unnecessary, pre-emptive wars. We should be building a consensus for the future that makes it easier to end our current troubles in Iraq.

It's amazing to me that this Congress is more intimidated by political propagandists and special interests than the American electorate, who sent a loud, clear message about the war in November. The large majority of Americans now want us out of Iraq.

Our leaders cannot grasp the tragic consequence of our policies toward Iraq for the past 25 years. It's time we

woke them up.

We are still by far the greatest military power on earth. But since we stubbornly refuse to understand the nature of our foes, we are literally defeating ourselves.

In 2004, bin Laden stated that Al Qaeda's goal was to bankrupt the United States. His second in command, Zawahari, is quoted as saying that the 9/11 attack would cause Americans to, "come and fight the war personally on our sand where they are within rifle range."

Sadly, we are playing into their hands. This \$124 billion appropriation is only part of the nearly \$1 trillion in military spending for this year's budget alone. We should be concerned about the coming bankruptcy and the crisis facing the U.S. dollar.

We have totally failed to adapt to modern warfare. We're dealing with a small, nearly invisible enemy--an enemy without a country, a government, an army, a navy, an air force, or missiles. Yet our enemy is armed with suicidal determination, and motivated by our meddling in their regional affairs, to destroy us.

And as we bleed financially, our men and women in Iraq die needlessly while the injured swell Walter Reed hospital. Our government systematically undermines the Constitution and the liberties it's supposed to protect-- for which it is claimed our soldiers are dying in faraway places.

Only with the complicity of Congress have we become a nation of pre-emptive war, secret military tribunals, torture, rejection of habeas corpus, warrantless searches, undue government secrecy, extraordinary renditions, and uncontrollable spying on the American people. The greatest danger we face is ourselves: what we are doing in the name of providing security for a people made fearful by distortions of facts. Fighting over there has nothing to do with preserving freedoms here at home. More likely the opposite is true.

Surely we can do better than this supplemental authorization. I plan to vote no.