

2/15/2007 - Congressman Albio Sires Speech On Iraq War Policy Resolution

For Immediate Release

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(Washington, D.C.) - Today, Congressman Albio Sires gave the following speech on the floor of the House of Representatives during debate on H.Con.Res. 63, the Iraq War Policy Resolution:

"Madame Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution on behalf of the 32,000 men and women from my state of New Jersey and all the other servicemen and women that have been deployed since 9/11. I am so proud of their sacrifice and service to our nation and I will continue to support them. I'm standing in front of you as a product of the sacrifices our soldiers have made in the name of liberty and freedom throughout the history of this country. I also rise on behalf of my constituents, the people of New Jersey and the people of this nation whose tax dollars are paying for this war in Iraq.

"Since the beginning of the war, \$379 billion has already been appropriated and another \$235 billion is slated for the upcoming supplemental appropriations. We are currently spending \$8 billion a month in Iraq and the American people are footing the bill. All this money could have been used to declare war on some of our domestic problems here at home such as poverty, improving our schools, ensuring access to health care, and investing in affordable housing. This money could have been used to invest in our children, our families, our veterans and our elderly. But, it wasn't.

"Instead, American taxpayers have also committed more than \$38 billion to Iraq Reconstruction. About 33 percent of this money is targeted for infrastructure projects like roads, sanitation, water, electric power and oil production. However, I am concerned that:

- Only 25 percent of the Iraqi population has access to drinkable water.
- Of 136 sanitation and water projects, only 49 are set to be completed.
- Residents in Baghdad only have 4 and a half hours of electricity per day, and
- Current oil production in Iraq is half of what it was prior to the war.

"Since the reconstruction projects started, the Coalition Provisional Authority can't account for almost \$9 billion of taxpayer money. Every year, \$4 billion is being lost because of lack of oversight. There have also been many problems with poor project and quality management. For example:

- The Baghdad Police College cost \$75 million and was built without proper plumbing for waste water. It has become a health and structural hazard.
- The Basrah Children's Hospital is running \$48 million over budget and is a year behind schedule.
- And, after spending \$186 million, Parsons has only 6 of 150 planned health care centers completed and only 14 more will be finished.

"The list goes on and on. Madame Speaker, the Iraqi government says \$100 billion is needed over the next 4 years to

rebuild the country's infrastructure. Madame Speaker, the Iraqi Government seems to think they have open access to U.S. dollars, because their government is currently sitting on \$10 billion that could be used to help rebuild Iraq. The Iraqi government and the Iraqi people MUST take responsibility and help rebuild their country. Our support is not open-ended and neither are our tax dollars.

"Madame Speaker, I support this resolution and this debate because our troops and our constituents can no longer afford to have this Congress support the Administration's failed Iraq policies. They FAILED to give us the necessary oversight for Iraq reconstruction efforts, they FAILED to listen to the advice of military commanders, they FAILED to listen to the American people, and as a result, they FAILED to provide a plan for success in Iraq.

"Thank you Madame Speaker and I yield back the balance of my time."