

## 3/21/2007 - Congressman Albio Sires Defends Iraq Reconstruction Bill

Testifies before the House Foreign Affairs Committee

For Immediate Release

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(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Albio Sires testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee regarding his bill, H.R. 1325, the Partnership for Iraq Reconstruction Act. This bill requires the Iraqi Government to match all U.S. funds used for reconstruction in Iraq. It would also require the President to report to Congress on the implementation of this Act.

Tom Lantos, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee commented the following after Congressman Sires' testimony: "Rep Sires provided thought-provoking testimony on his legislation concerning the most pressing foreign policy issue that America confronts today - the conflict in Iraq. The legislation is thoughtful and serious. I appreciate this opportunity to hear from him, and the Committee will consider the legislation carefully."

The following is Congressman Sires' testimony as prepared for delivery:

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and my colleagues for allowing me to testify before the Committee today regarding my bill, H.R. 1325, the Partnership for Iraq Reconstruction Act. The ultimate goal of this bill is to hold the Iraqi Government and its leaders accountable for their progress by giving them a greater stake in the reconstruction efforts.

H.R. 1325 would require the Iraqi Government to match, dollar for dollar, all U-S funds that are spent on reconstruction in Iraq. The language was drafted intentionally to be general in nature. The idea is not to have the Iraqi Government submit matching funds for each individual contract or grant, but to simply have U-S funds matched. These funds could be used in areas where they see fit or in conjunction with a U-S funded project.

I understand there are concerns that the Iraqi Government may not have enough money to match U.S. funding for reconstruction efforts. However, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice recently testified before this Committee that the Iraqi Government is committing \$10 billion of its own funds for reconstruction. In the upcoming Supplemental Appropriations bill, \$2.3 billion are going towards Iraq reconstruction. The \$10 billion the Iraqi Government has designated for reconstruction efforts is more than enough to begin matching the funds appropriated by Congress.

Mr. Chairman, what better place is there for the Iraqi Government to invest its money besides its own infrastructure, its own people and its own future?

I think all of my colleagues can agree that reconstruction in Iraq must continue in order to guarantee progress and to help foster economic growth for the Iraqi people. We have seen many extremist groups in the Middle East feed off the failure of governments to provide services for their citizens because of corruption and mismanagement. We have two very good examples in Hamas and Hezbollah. We must make sure that similar extremist groups and factions do not start taking hold of Iraq.

I believe that requiring the Iraqi Government to fund reconstruction projects will help give them credibility in the eyes of the Iraqi people. This also provides a united front by showing the factions within Iraq that the government is committed to the stabilization and progress of the country.

Mr. Chairman, the Iraqi Government believes \$100 billion dollars is needed over the next four years to rebuild the country's infrastructure. The U-S has already committed more than \$38 billion to Iraq reconstruction - over one third of the funds needed. I believe the U-S must continue to help Iraq with its reconstruction efforts. However, the Iraqi Government must also show its people that the government cares and is investing in their well-being and progress.