

(Washington, DC)- Rep. Jason Altmire (PA-4) addressed the U.S. House of Representatives today in favor of H. Con. Res. 63, expressing support for our troops and opposition to the President's proposal to escalate troops in Iraq. The following are Rep. Altmire's remarks as prepared for delivery:

"In the lead up to the war in Iraq, the President offered the American people many reasons why we should enter this conflict. We were told unequivocally that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and posed an imminent threat to the United States. We have since learned that the pre-war intelligence was completely inaccurate. We were told that proceeds from Iraq's oil reserves would pay for the cost of the war. Instead, the American people have paid the cost of the war - costs nearing \$400 billion with a supplemental request for an additional \$100 billion. We were told that we would be greeted as liberators. But nothing could be further from the truth. More than 3,000 American troops have been killed, more than 23,000 injured, and the violence in Iraq continues to escalate. There are over 900 weekly attacks on U.S. troops.

These predictions were in the past, but they are instructive as we consider the President's current predictions about how to achieve success in Iraq.

The American people have expressed their clear frustration with the conduct of the war. The bipartisan Iraq Study Group offered a comprehensive strategy to successfully move combat forces out of Iraq. High-level military leaders, including General John Abizaid, have expressed opposition to an escalation of troops.

But the President continues to ignore public opinion, reject sound advice, and stubbornly adhere to his failed go-it-alone policies. He says he wants a bipartisan study, but when the results are not to his liking, he disregards it. He says he wants to hear from his advisors, but when they disagree with him, he dismisses them. He says he wants to hear from his generals on the ground, but when they tell him what he doesn't want to hear, they are reassigned.

Perhaps this explains why so many of the predictions we have heard from this Administration have turned out so wrong. The fact is, the President's plan to escalate the war in Iraq is not a new policy - it is more of the same failed policy.

The solution in Iraq requires the Iraqis themselves to reach a political settlement and take responsibility for their own country. The continued open-ended commitment of U.S. forces only deters the Iraqis from making the appropriate political decisions, training security forces, and enacting the reforms necessary to achieve stability.

The Iraq War resolution before us today is simple and straightforward. Let me explain what it does and what it doesn't do.

First and foremost, it expresses our continued support for our military men and women who are serving bravely and honorably. It also expresses the sense of Congress that we disapprove of the decision made by the President to send additional troops to Iraq.

Make no mistake, this is a resolution in support of our troops. Anyone who says otherwise is simply wrong. No member of this House, Republican or Democrat, wants anything less than victory in Iraq and to support our troops. This resolution does not affect the funding levels to carry out the war. And on that point, let me be clear: as long as we have troops in the field of battle and brave Americans in harm's way, I will never vote to withhold their funding.

I support this resolution because we have a duty as representatives of the American people to continue to voice their opinion - that with his policy of escalation, the President is heading down the wrong path.

The best way forward is for the President to work with Congress to change course and adopt a responsible strategy that protects American interests- in Iraq, throughout the region, and at home. This resolution is the first step in a new direction on Iraq. I urge every member of this House, on both sides of the aisle, to heed the call for change and vote for this resolution."