

Nov 18 2005 - Rules Committee Republicans Unanimously Vote-out Hunter Resolution to Immediately Withdraw Troops From Iraq

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Republicans Play Politics with Iraq

Slaughter, Dems Condemn the Hunter Withdrawal Bill

Washington, DC - Tonight in the House Rules Committee, Chairman David Dreier and the Republicans on the Committee unanimously voted to allow a resolution authored by Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA-52), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, which calls for the immediate withdrawal of all American military forces from Iraq, to be considered on the House floor for a full debate and floor vote. The Democrats opposed the measure and were defeated by a 9-4 vote.

The bill (H.R. 571) was authored and submitted to rules by Chairman Hunter in response to yesterday's critique of the Iraq war by Rep. John Murtha, Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee and both a decorated war veteran and a 31-year member of the House of Representatives.

"Rep. Hunter and the Republican Leadership have made a joke of this country's debate over the war in Iraq by twisting the honest and courageous words of a concerned patriot. This is just the latest in a long Republican campaign to stifle debate on Iraq and discredit critics of the war," Rep. Slaughter said. "As an experienced legislator, he should know that words have consequences, and he admitted as much in the Rules Committee this evening. His resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of American troops is irresponsible, is clearly not sincere, and will only serve to confuse our troops, hurt their morale, embolden our enemies, and place on clear display the contempt this Republican leadership has for anyone who dares question them " she added.

In his statement, Rep. Murtha criticized the war effort, but never called for an immediate withdrawal of American forces from Iraq, as Rep. Hunter's bill seeks. Rep. Murtha stated in part that, "The United States and coalition troops have done all they can in Iraq, but it is time for a change in direction." He continued: "It is evident that continued military action is not in the best interests of the United States of America, the Iraqi people or the Persian Gulf Region."

Text of Rep. Slaughter's Rules Floor Speech

M. Speaker, The speed with which the Majority has sought to challenge the frank and honest appraisal of the war in Iraq offered yesterday by my friend Rep. John Murtha proves that what he said resonated with the American people. Over 60 percent of our nation no longer believes we are headed in the right direction in Iraq. When Mr. Murtha spoke yesterday, he spoke for the majority of our country.

Concerns such as those voiced by Mr. Murtha are not a sign of weakness... Nor are they the product of a failure of resolve, or a willingness to cower before adversity... as many administration apologists have suggested. Rather, they follow from a logical assessment of one of the most respected military affairs and international relations experts we have in all these United States...and that is exactly what has this Congressional Leadership and this White House so

concerned. That is why they have gone out of their way in the last twenty-four hours to attack Rep. Murtha.... After all, attacking those who have the temerity to challenge this White House is what Republicans in Congress do best...but they have chosen a formidable target in Jack Murtha. Unlike our President, our Vice-President, the Secretary of Defense, our Secretary of State or the vast, vast majority of Members in this House...Jack Murtha knows combat. At the age of 34, he didn't have to go and fight in Vietnam, but he did. He knows our troops, and cares for them deeply. He has regularly visited them in our hospitals. He has seen their wounds, stood by them during their time of need, and listened to their hopes and fears. He has been to Iraq, seen the state of that nation with his own eyes. He is a true patriot and wants only the success of the United States and the Iraqi people.

And this is why he spoke with such passion yesterday. Rep. Murtha spoke for the American people when he said that the time has come for a change in direction. And everyone in this chamber knows that...because Jack Murtha is one of the most widely respected members in this House. No matter the attacks this Majority chooses to employ those who would question them, the reality on the ground in Iraq is obvious to all who wish to see it. America's continued military occupation of that nation will not bring stability. Our forces are drawing fire, not suppressing it. Their presence on foreign soil is serving as a catalyst for all those who wish to do us, and Iraq, harm. Insurgent attacks are on the rise, and more American and Iraqi lives are lost every single day. We can no longer continue on this failing path, unwavering, with no end in sight. We can no longer ask Americans and Iraqis to give up their lives for a goal which we are making less attainable by the hour. We must chart a new course. Mr. Murtha's redeployment plan comes from an experienced statesman and soldier who has and will continue to do whatever he thinks is best for our nation. I implore my colleagues across the aisle to realize... that continued Republican attacks which seek to dismiss and discredit the valuable critiques of knowledgeable legislators, as well as the heartfelt will of the American people, will succeed in silencing neither. Nor will they change the reality on the ground in Iraq.

More Republican assaults will not hide the gross mismanagement and corruption which has plagued this Administration's attempt to prosecute this war. And they will not mollify Americans growing concerns over flawed intelligence, broken trust, subverted values and shameful acts of torture...all forced by the hand of an Administration that answers in half truths and obfuscations.

These cynical and all too typical Republican attempts to silence dissent, stifle debate, and discredit those who would dare to hold them accountable will only serve to elevate the power of the message that Congressman Murtha is delivering to this government and to the American people. And the Republicans today, by attacking him will succeed only in betraying themselves....just like the name-calling, sand throwing bullies in a schoolyard they have so willingly become. The dramatic nature of their panicked response has clearly demonstrated just how incredibly valued Mr. Murtha's judgment really is to military experts at the Pentagon, to Members of the Congress, to the American intelligence community, to the White House and to our entire federal government. I hope it will also demonstrate just how valuable it should be to the American people as well...and how truly out of step the Republican Party is with the hearts and minds of the citizens of our country.