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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman H. Res. 734, House Consideration of Resolution on Iraq Corruption October 16, 2007

Today we mark an ominous anniversary.

Five years ago today, President Bush signed the congressional authorization to use military force in Iraq. As we have learned since, that authorization was based on fatally flawed information. Congress and the American people were told that we needed to go to war because Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. But there were no nuclear bombs or biological weapons.

Now, five years later, more than 3,800 U.S. service members have been killed, more than 28,000 have been injured, and the U.S. taxpayers have spent more than \$450 billion. And Iraq is in shambles.

Today, we are considering a different resolution. The purpose of today's resolution is simple: to end the abuse of the classification process and to demand the truth about corruption in Iraq.

We must stop the pattern of dissembling and the misuse of classified information. President Bush is now asking taxpayers for an additional \$150 billion to support the war and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. But the Bush Administration is not being honest about the level of corruption in the Maliki government.

Just as it did five years ago, the Bush Administration is hiding the truth while seeking hundreds of billions of dollars and placing our troops in danger.

We cannot allow this to happen again.

We need answers to some important questions: How corrupt is the Maliki government? Are top officials in Iraq stealing billions of dollars to fund insurgents who are attacking and killing our troops? Is corruption undermining the chances for political reconciliation?

Secretary of State Rice says she will answer these questions only on one condition: every member of Congress who hears the answers has to agree to keep the answers secret.

That is an outrageous abuse of the classification system.

Earlier this month, the former head of the Iraqi Commission on Public Integrity, Judge Radhi, testified before the Oversight Committee. He told us that corrupt Iraqi officials had stolen a staggering sum — \$18 billion — and used part of the money to fund terrorists.

He told us that when he tried to track down who was responsible, 31 of his investigators were brutally assassinated, and his own family in the Green Zone was targeted twice in rocket attacks.

And he gave us copies of secret orders that Prime Minister Maliki personally issued to protect his allies — including his own cousin — from corruption investigations and prosecutions.

Judge Radhi, Special Inspector General Stuart Bowen, and Comptroller General David Walker all told that corruption is so entrenched in Iraq that it is jeopardizing our troops and our mission.

But when we asked the State Department for unclassified documents about the extent of corruption in the Maliki government, Secretary Rice retroactively classified them. And when we asked Embassy officials what they knew about corruption, she ordered them not to respond.

Secretary Rice has made public statements praising the anticorruption efforts of Prime Minister Maliki and the corrupt Interior Ministry. But when we asked Embassy officials in Iraq whether her public statements were accurate, they said they were not allowed to respond unless we agreed to keep their answers secret.

Five years ago, abuse of classified information got us into the war. It is time for these abuses to end. Please support this resolution.