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Inglis feels heat from constituents
GOP congressman opposes more troops for Iraq

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U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis said Friday his vote with the Democratic House majority against a troop increase in Iraq is drawing "very strong opposition" from local constituents but that it's time for Iraqis to solve their own problems.

Inglis said he supported the nonbinding resolution rejecting the troop increase because it amounts to "mission creep" toward nation building -- which he doesn't support -- and furthers the mistake by so-called neo-conservatives of using military might to "rearrange the globe."

"I'm happy to have a fight with the neo-cons because I think that they are the ones who led us to the place where we are, led us to the slaughter," Inglis said in an interview with The Greenville News minutes before the 3 p.m. House vote.

Seventeen Republicans joined 229 Democrats in favor of the resolution. An identical measure is scheduled for a test vote today in the Senate.

Advertisement Inglis was the only one among South Carolina's four GOP House members to support the resolution. Democrats James Clyburn and John Spratt voted for the resolution.

U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham criticized the House action within minutes Friday, saying in a statement that it "will embolden our enemies and put our troops in additional jeopardy."

Inglis said he is doing what troops expect -- working overtime to set clear goals, measure progress and push Iraqi leaders toward solutions.


Inglis said he doesn't support funding cuts and doesn't support immediate withdrawal.

However, he did call on President Bush to publicize a timetable that pushes Iraqis to deal with pressing issues by specific dates -- dividing oil revenues, for example -- and that the consequences for not cooperating should be withdrawal of troops.

"We have the right to tell the Iraqi leadership to hurry," Inglis said, describing a troop surge as the opposite message: "Don't worry, no need to hurry."

Asked if the current Iraqi government, already mired in corruption, is able to deal with pressing issues such as fairly slicing oil revenues, Inglis said, "It's their responsibility."

Asked what he's heard from the White House about his position, Inglis said officials there were less worried about Friday's nonbinding resolution than the upcoming vote on troop funding.

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In voting against the troop increase, Inglis sided with an exultant Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, whom he repeatedly derided in last year's congressional campaign.

Graham said in his statement that Democratic leaders are "laying the groundwork to cut off funding for our troops in Iraq."

Inglis acknowledged the political difficulty of his position, but said it's not as simple as a Democratic-Republican divide and that Pelosi will find the going much tougher when it comes to troop funding. He has assured the White House that he will "absolutely" support funding for troops.

Inglis said he's responding to unhappy constituents by doing a lot of talking, and pointed specifically to a similar U.S. effort last August to crack down on insurgent activity block by block in Baghdad, which coincided with his visit to Iraq.

"It didn't work out," Inglis said, adding, "It's just very hard to enter a family feud when the family is using beheadings to make their point."

Behind some of his thinking on the troop issue is a former legislative director now serving in Iraq with the National Guard, who Inglis said has communicated the expectations of people on the ground.

Inglis did say he would have worded Friday's resolution differently.

"I wish it weren't so blunt," he said.
