

Congresswoman Susan A. Davis
H.R. 1084

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1084.

In today's security environment, it is absolutely necessary that we authorize the creation of the Response Readiness Corps and Response Readiness Reserve within the State Department and USAID.

This legislation is a vital step toward achieving a proper balance between civilian and military efforts in stabilization and reconstruction missions.

Iraq and Afghanistan have highlighted a need for better interagency coordination and a more robust civilian capacity.

As someone who went to Iraq early on and saw a void of adequate civilian support, I know that we need to improve the civilian apparatus for future stability and reconstruction efforts.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, we have relied on the military to act as diplomats, help build government capacity and conduct combat missions all at the same time.

Simply put, stability and reconstruction has fallen too heavily on our military in recent years.

Unable to tap into a viable, full-scale deployable civilian force, our brave men and women have been asked to perform jobs outside of their area of expertise.

Congress must do a better job of marshaling all elements of national power in support of U.S. goals abroad and ensure that future missions are not military-centric, but joint, interagency efforts.

Part of this effort must be greater capacity within civilian agencies, a “bench,” to pull from when contingencies arise.

The bill by my friend from California will help do just that.

Congress must also be thinking about how to capture the skills and lessons learned from military personnel and civilians who have served on PRTs or other interagency projects in Iraq and Afghanistan.

These individuals now have vital skills that could be used to help train federal civilians employees deploying to zones of conflict.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 1084 gets us on the right path and I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation. I yield back the balance of my time.