



Thoughts From . . .

## CAPITOL HILL

By Congressman Rodney Alexander



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# Congress Must Fund the Real Fight

## *Political Ploys Jeopardize Troop Safety*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – When our brave men and women join the military, they vow to serve and protect our country – not a political party.

More than other citizens, our servicemen and women understand the cost of freedom, and their willingness to serve is their way of giving back to a country that has given us all so much. In return for their service, the military deserves Congress' full support, and I am ashamed to say that current Congressional leadership is not providing that.

Earlier this year, President Bush asked Congress to pass a measure, an emergency war supplemental, to provide our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan with the resources they need. House leadership responded to the President's request with the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 – a bill rife with pork barrel funding unrelated to military needs, such as \$115 million for the conservation security program, \$50 million for asbestos abatement at the Capitol Power Plant and \$10 million for the historic preservation fund.

The bill also included a timeline for surrender in Iraq, and while I am as anxious as everyone else to see our troops arrive safely home, I cannot support a measure that undermines our generals on the ground.

For this reason, I did not support this legislation when it passed the House of Representatives on April 19, nor did I support the final version of the legislation which, after emerging from conference with the Senate, still included the timeline for troop withdrawal.

It is not the role of Congress to micro-manage a war; our responsibility is to appropriate funding to our military, but Congressional leadership refused to do so without political strings attached.

Despite confirmation from President Bush that he would veto the legislation if it included the timeline, both chambers passed the legislation. As a result, a political agenda to abandon the war in Iraq has put aside the immediate needs of those fighting it.

As promised, President Bush vetoed the legislation on May 1, asserting that setting a timeline for troop withdrawal was “setting a date for failure.” The following day, a motion to override the veto failed to receive the two-thirds majority necessary to pass the House.

House and Senate leadership will now be sent back to the drawing board to draft a “clean” troop funding bill without the timeline language – legislation leaders have been promising to introduce since March but have yet to deliver.

In the meantime, while Congressional leaders carry on their verbal wars on the floors of the House and Senate chambers, claiming to know what is best for our soldiers, our soldiers continue the real fight in places far different from the marble halls of the Capitol.

And they continue to wait for the rhetoric to end and the real support to begin.

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