

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 4, 2008

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The war in Iraq is in its sixth year. More than 4,000 Americans have been killed and 30,000 wounded in a conflict which has already cost the nation's taxpayers more than half a trillion dollars. In our nation's long history since securing our independence, only one war, Vietnam, has been longer and only one, World War II, has been more costly.

We are deeply concerned that you and the congressional Republican leadership are intent on staying the current course throughout your Administration and then handing the Iraq war off to future presidents. Indeed, some in your party have indicated we should be prepared to stay in Iraq for fifty or even one hundred years. That would only compound the damage done to our national security by years of flawed Iraq policies.

The American people favor and our national security demands a different, better way. We salute the courage and hard work of our troops during more than five years of dangerous and difficult service. But the strategic purpose of the surge strategy you announced more than a year ago – creating the conditions for Iraqis to forge a political solution in order to hasten the day our troops can return home – has not been achieved. In fact, your Administration recently indicated that more U.S. troops will remain deployed in Iraq after the surge has ended than were there when the surge began. This is not what the American people were led to expect when you announced the surge nearly fifteen months ago.

The current Iraq strategy has no discernible end in sight and requires the United States to spend additional hundreds of billions of dollars despite urgent national needs in education, health care, and infrastructure improvement, and when high oil prices have provided the Iraqi government with billions in additional revenue that could pay for their own redevelopment and security. This strategy is neither sustainable nor in our broader national security or economic interest. That is why we favor the following four-part strategy to change course:

First, we must urgently seek political accommodation among Iraqis and transition the U.S. mission in Iraq. Our military has done its best in Iraq; it is time for the Iraqis and the Administration's civilian leaders to do their part. The current

Administration policy fails to hold the Iraqis accountable for the lack of progress on political reconciliation and instead holds our troops hostage to an ineffective government. We must demand that others who are key to progress in Iraq exhibit the bravery, creativity and urgency that our troops have shown. We must shift to what General Petraeus has termed a posture of strategic overwatch so that we create additional incentives for the Iraqis to embrace political accommodation which will allow us to reduce US troop levels substantially and devote more of our resources to a number of other important national security challenges. We will also continue to insist on a strong Congressional role in shaping any long-term security arrangements pertaining to Iraq. Your Administration should not create facts that bind the hands of the next president.

Second, we must restore the highest state of readiness to our Army and Marine Corps. Repeated and extended deployments to Iraq have greatly strained our military's capabilities. Readiness has sunk to levels not seen since Vietnam. Units do not have enough time at home to achieve through training the full-spectrum combat capabilities on which our security depends. We have no ready reserve for an unexpected crisis. We must begin immediately to restore the readiness of our Army and Marine Corps by returning to 12 month deployments, and providing active and reserve units sufficient time at home between deployments to retrain and reequip. We must also continue to provide our warriors, wounded warriors, and veterans with the benefits and services they deserve.

Third, we must dedicate sufficient resources to secure Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al Qaeda's senior leadership – including Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri – has reportedly reconstituted to pre-9/11 strength in safe-havens along the Afghanistan / Pakistan border. This was exacerbated when your Administration supported a Pakistani peace deal in the tribal areas giving al Qaeda's senior leadership time to regroup in this border area. We must refocus our attention on this grave and growing Al Qaeda threat, increasing our military, diplomatic, and economic development efforts in both countries, instead of tying up the bulk of our resources in Iraqi internal sectarian violence.

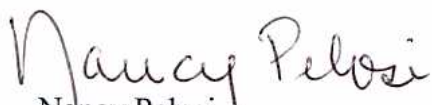
Finally, we must tackle broader challenges of regional stability. We must address two important security challenges – Iran and the ongoing turmoil that confronts our ally Israel and moderate Arab regimes, particularly Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority. Regional stability is being hindered by the Administration's Iraq strategy. The long-term challenge posed by Iran requires serious and sustained diplomatic and political effort, and the current Iraq policy is undermining our ability to meet that challenge. The Administration has not yet engaged in effective diplomacy to work with regional and international partners to forge a longer-term regional security architecture. We believe you must pursue an energetic and effective diplomatic effort to get others in the region invested in addressing Iraq's political, economic and security issues as well as these broader regional stability challenges.

We believe there is still time for you to recognize that a change in strategy is necessary to repair the grave damage done to our nation's security. We are committed to


bringing about the necessary changes of course articulated in the four-part plan above and hope you will work with us. Implementing elements of this plan will be the focus of our legislative efforts. At the same time as we move forward legislatively, we will press for accountability and oversight on the increasing costs and devastating consequences that the current strategy is having on our national security posture. And Congress and its committees will be preparing to ensure the smoothest possible transition for the next President.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these views. We look forward to a vigorous debate this spring on these critically important strategic questions.

Sincerely,


Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House


Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader



Steny H. Hoyer
House Majority Leader


Richard J. Durbin
Senate Assistant Majority Leader


David R. Obey
Chairman, House Appropriations
Committee


Robert C. Byrd
Chairman, Senate Appropriations
Committee


Ike Skelton
Chairman, House Armed Services
Committee


Carl Levin
Chairman, Senate Armed Services
Committee



Howard Berman
Chairman, House Foreign Affairs
Committee



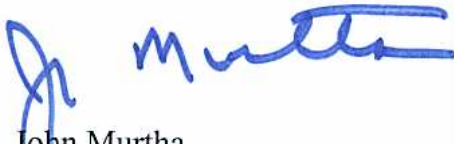
Joseph R. Biden Jr.
Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations
Committee



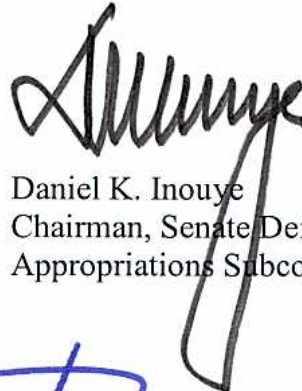
Silvestre Reyes
Chairman, House Permanent
Select Committee on Intelligence



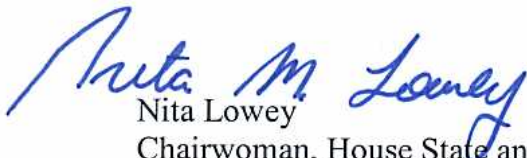
John D. Rockefeller IV
Chairman, Senate Select Committee
on Intelligence



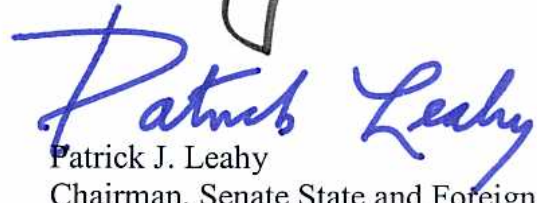
John Murtha
Chairman, House Defense
Appropriations Subcommittee



Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman, Senate Defense
Appropriations Subcommittee



Nita Lowey
Chairwoman, House State and Foreign
Operations Appropriations
Subcommittee



Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman, Senate State and Foreign
Operations Appropriations
Subcommittee