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WASHINGTON – U.S. Representative John B. Larson (CT-1) today expressed disappointment that Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki failed to address specific concerns about the future of Iraq.

In a letter dated July 21, 2006, Larson asked Prime Minister Maliki to address two critical issues during his visit to the United States: amnesty for insurgents who have killed Americans and the recent anti-Semitic remarks by the Iraqi Parliament Speaker.

Larson stated, "I am gravely disappointed that Prime Minister Maliki failed to address these crucial issues which are important for the future of Iraq and the future of the Middle East. While the Prime Minister has stated that no amnesty will be given to those who kill Americans, the proposed reconciliation plan remains vague and polls show that forty-seven percent of Iraqis approve of killing Americans. Additionally, Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani said yesterday, "I personally think whoever kills an American soldier in defense of his country would have a statue built for him in that country." I had hoped Prime Minister Maliki would dispel these anti-American sentiments and stand strongly by his earlier statements opposing amnesty for insurgents who kill Americans.

"While he spoke of universal human rights and equality, I am further disappointed that the Prime Minister did not reject recent anti-Semitic remarks coming from the Iraqi government. Not only has the Parliament Speaker accused Jews of financing acts of violence in Iraq in an attempt to seize power in the government, the Prime Minister himself has condemned Israel as it defends itself against terrorist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas. It was my hope that during his address the Prime Minister would stand with other Arab nations like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan in condemning the actions of Hezbollah, a group responsible for the deaths of 241 Marines in 1983. These hateful sentiments have no place in public discourse and set back the efforts of those trying to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East.

"The Prime Minister was not here addressing the U.S. Congress simply as an honor. He was here to answer serious questions that America has about the future of Iraq. The United States has stood by Iraq and its fledgling government and thousands of our men and women have sacrificed life and limb for the cause of Iraqi democracy. For him to neglect the issues of amnesty and anti-Semitism is an affront to all Americans and my colleague Rosa DeLauro was justified in boycotting his address. I will continue to press for the Prime Minister to take a clear stand on these issues."

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