

Congressman Larson testifies to Foreign AFFAIRS Committee on bill to address situation in Iraq

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 21, 2007

Congressman Larson testifies to Foreign AFFAIRS Committee on bill to address situation in Iraq

Bill would address Bush policy of preemption and unilateralism and the Iraq war

WASHINGTON- Today, Congressman John B. Larson (CT-1) testified in front of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs regarding H.R. 1292, a bill he introduced addressing the Bush policy of preemption and unilateralism and the Iraq war. The bill would repeal the use of force given to President Bush by Congress in 2002, calls for a new vote on the war on Iraq based on the current situation, and outlines a different foreign policy approach toward the Middle East that re-emphasizes the United States' long held priorities of diplomacy, deterrence, and containment (bill text attached). Other Members of Congress with Iraq related legislation will have a similar opportunity to testify in front of the committee on their respective bills.

Rep. Larson provided thought-provoking testimony on his legislation concerning the most pressing foreign policy issue that America confronts today the conflict in Iraq, said Congressman Tom Lantos, chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. The legislation is thoughtful and serious. I appreciate this opportunity to hear from him, and the Committee will consider the legislation carefully.

A transcript of Congressman Larson's remarks follow:

Thank you very much Chairman Lantos and Ranking Member Ros-Lethinen, and the distinguished members of the Foreign Affairs Committee. There are a number of resolutions that are before this Committee. For so long in this Congress, American voices haven't had the opportunity to be heard. I thank you for this opportunity and the consideration that you have granted Members of Congress who have so many constructive resolutions to put forward. I hope in the process of weighing the very important debate and dialogue that is going on that my proposal will be considered amongst those.

Let me start by saying that this calls for, as the Chairman has pointed out, for the repeal of the provisions in the resolution that got us into the war in Iraq at its outset. How so? Well, we have to go back to the President's historic speech at West Point. In that speech at West Point in June of 2002, the President outlined what has become the doctrine of the Bush Administration. This doctrine was new to this country. The doctrine was a doctrine of preemption and unilateralism.

Oddly enough, the strongest critics of this doctrine that was inaugurated in June of 2002 the most outspoken critics of it, were Scowcroft, Eagleburger, Kissinger, and Baker, because they saw in this new doctrine the problematic concerns that would happen if one nation were to launch another preemptive strike. They understood far too well, as Bush the elder did, the need for us not to go into a conflict unilaterally but to go into a conflict with support.

In the process, what the Administration did alarmingly, is undermine more than 50 years of foreign policy based on diplomacy, deterrence and containment, They also overturned Casper Weinberger's Doctrine that the United States should never be involved in a military activity unless its vital interests are threatened and then to make sure that it had appropriate plans, including an exit strategy; and further then overturned breathtakingly, the Powell Corollary, which says if the United States is to be involved that it go in and use overwhelming force to secure the safety of our troops, the borders and to be able to provide for an exit strategy. Therein is the problem that we are dealing with.

This legislation seeks to revoke this. To provide the opportunity for us not to abandon the policies of a single President, but to re-embrace the policies of a Nation that established the Marshall Plan that provided us with diplomacy that created an environment where the United States enjoyed respect throughout the globe. Today, because of these policies we have undermined our standing in the world throughout Europe and with most countries around the world, and we have devastated it with the Muslim world.

We need a change of direction. We had virtually the entire world behind us when we went into Afghanistan and that has become the second front, and that is the second portion of this bill. To unite this Congress as we were as we stood on the steps on 9/11; what we needed to do in the war against terrorism was to actually go after the people who took down the Towers, who hit the Pentagon, and but for those brave souls on Flight 93 who would have hit the United States Capitol or the White House for sure. This legislation calls for us to go after and bring to justice Osama Bin Laden; to go after Al Qaeda; and to stop the Taliban that is re-grouping as we speak in Afghanistan. We need to stand united. And that is what I believe we need to accomplish.

More importantly Mr. Chairman, thank you for bringing this opportunity to Members of Congress. There is a larger discussion that has to go on, in a theme that runs throughout everything that is brought forward in these resolutions: Congress needs a debate and discussion about where we are as a nation. Where we are in terms of whether or not we are still the republic that we pledged our allegiance to or if we've become an empire where we don't quite understand our role in the world a reluctant empire if you will, but an empire none the less. Therefore where is the proper authority with Congress as it relates to the War Powers Act, as it relates to the Constitution, and therefore the vital role that this Committee and this Congress should enjoy and share and assert its prerogatives. That's why I have put forth this legislation and I ask for your consideration Mr. Chairman.

###