

House Passes Bill by Rep. Ellen Tauscher Requiring Down-time for Troops Between Iraq Deployments

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August 2, 2007

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Washington, DC – Today, by a vote of 229-194, the House of Representatives passed the Ensuring Military Readiness Through Stability and Predictability Deployment Policy Act of 2007 (H.R. 3159). The bill, which calls for mandatory down-time for all troops – active duty Armed Forces as well as Guard and Reserve units – between deployments to Iraq was authored and sponsored by Rep. Ellen Tauscher, Chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee.

The Reserve Enlisted Association, the only association representing enlisted Reservists of all ranks from all five branches the military, strongly supports the legislation. Veterans for America also endorsed the bill.

Rep. Tauscher delivered the following speech to the House in support of her bill:

Rep. Ellen O. Tauscher

H.R. 3159 Floor Statement

I am honored to offer H.R. 3159, a bipartisan bill to mandate minimum periods of rest and recuperation for units and members of regular and reserve components of our Armed Forces between deployments.

Fixing our troops’ unpredictable deployment policy is long overdue.

In an interview last Monday, Marine Corps Commandant General James Conway highlighted repeated deployments and short periods of time between them, as factors contributing to increased mental stress and burdens on families of servicemen and women.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I am intimately acquainted with how this war has damaged our national security, our diplomatic standing and the readiness of our military.

And as a Californian I am well aware of how it is draining the defense and security resources of my state and others. As we speak, a unit from Walnut Creek, California in my district is leading a task force comprised of six units that come from armories throughout the East Bay and Northern California. The California Army National Guard indicates that the unit of eight hundred and twenty four soldiers is the largest single California National Guard unit to be deployed since the Korean War. These are the men and women who will benefit from this legislation, in real time.

We are sending more and more men and women to Iraq everyday, and the Bush Administration is failing to accurately account for all the costs. On the micro level our deployed men and women are being taken away from their families in a revolving door of service because the war has gone on much longer than the President believed it would. And on the larger scale we are damaging the readiness of our Armed Forces to defend against future attacks as well as national emergencies here at home.

My bill states that if a unit or member of a regular component of the Armed Forces deploys to Iraq, they will have an equivalent amount of time at home before they are redeployed. No unit or member of a Reserve Component, including the National Guard, could be redeployed to Iraq within three years of their previous deployment.

In the event of an operational emergency posing a threat to vital national security interests, the President may waive the amendment's limitations by certifying to Congress that the deployment of the unit or member is necessary. The military departments also are provided waiver authority for individual volunteers who seek to redeploy before the expiration of the mandated time between deployments.

This bill in no way, shape or form hinders the Commander in Chief's ability to manage military personnel.

My friends, it is critical that we come together and take this critical step to preserve the readiness of our men and women in uniform – for them and for our national security. If we are honest about wanting to support our troops, there is no better place to start than to correct our troop-rotation policy. For far too long members of the Guard and Reserve have been under-represented in Congress. Today you have an opportunity to help them.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.