

07/13/2007

Dear Friend:

What can you say about a policy that has cost nearly half a trillion dollars, killed more than 3,600 American troops and led to the deaths of roughly 100,000 civilians?

I say the policy has failed. And last night, the U.S. House of Representatives said the same thing. For the sixth time since January, the House on Thursday voted against President Bush's Iraq policy. We voted (223-201) to redeploy American forces from Iraq within 120 days, leaving only a limited presence in Iraq by April 1, 2008. In other words, we yet again told the President it's time for a change.

After nearly four and one-half years in Iraq, and months after the so-called surge began, we are left with no demonstrable or sustainable progress in Iraq. Instead over 3,600 Americans have died, including 35 New Mexicans. Our ground forces have been seriously exhausted, with troops serving three and four tours of duty. And American taxpayers continue to shell out around \$329 million dollars per day while our national debt escalates and domestic priorities go down the drain. With the nearly \$450 billion already spent in Iraq, we could have hired 7.7 million teachers, put almost 22 million students through college or provided health insurance for every child in America. Instead, President Bush has squandered our resources on a failed policy in an irresponsible war that has resulted in the loss of American lives.

Six months after the President's "surge" began, we have sadly seen only a surge in violence, a surge in deaths, and a surge in cost; we have not seen a surge in stability. Instead, a report released by the military last week shows that Iraq has failed to meet key political, military and economic benchmarks that the President endorsed in January. The U.S. House has heard the American people's call for a new direction in Iraq. Unfortunately, it seems that once again the President is ignoring the American public and insisting on "staying the course."

President Bush has left our troops caught in the middle of another nation's civil war. Only the Iraqi government can do what it takes to bring peace to that country. Our troops have performed heroically, completing their missions to the absolute best of their abilities and removing Saddam Hussein from power. Keeping them in Iraq any longer would only result in greater losses and the continued misdirection of our forces. It is time we refocus our efforts to fight the real perpetrators of terrorist acts on our nation. It's time to refocus on finding Osama Bin Laden and stopping the efforts led by Al Qaeda, not on a conflict we had no business waging in the first place.

Very Truly Yours,

Tom Udall
Member of Congress