

(June 29, 2007) Representative Lipinski to President Bush: Immediately Change the Course of War

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Change Course of War and Reconvene Bipartisan Iraq Study Group

[WASHINGTON, DC] Today, Congressman Dan Lipinski (D-IL) joined Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), Rep. Mark Udall (D-CO), Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX), and Rep. Christopher Shays (R-CO) in sending a letter to President Bush calling for him to immediately reconvene the Iraq Study Group (ISG).

The House voted 355-69 last week for an amendment to provide \$1 million to the U.S. Institute of Peace for the purposes of reestablishing the ISG. The ISG would focus on evaluating conditions in Iraq one year later, comparing its findings to those of a year ago, and reviewing and updating its recommendations. The Members asked for presidential action because the Foreign Operations appropriations bill - in which the amendment is included - is unlikely to be signed into law by the President quickly enough for a newly constituted ISG to report in the fall.

"The ISG provides a way to break through the partisan gridlock on Iraq and it should be reconvened to provide a new, independent assessment of the current situation," said Lipinski. "But America must not continue the current course until the new report. The ISG has already provided thoughtful recommendations on how we can move toward successfully concluding the war and bringing our troops home, and we should start implementing those immediately."

Earlier this month, Congressmen Lipinski, Udall, Wolf and McCaul led a group of bipartisan members of the House of Representatives in introducing H.R. 2574, a bill to implement the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. This bill, which was also introduced in the Senate, avoids the partisan gridlock of previous Iraq legislation and already has 57 bipartisan cosponsors in the House of Representatives. Among other things, it provides for a diplomatic offensive on Iraq, shifts U.S. forces to a support and training role, and allows for U.S. troops not necessary to fighting terrorism and protecting U.S. personnel in Iraq to redeploy by early 2008.

"This type of cooperation by members from both sides of the aisle is absolutely necessary if Congress is going to significantly change the disastrous Iraq policies of President Bush," said Lipinski. "Recalcitrant presidents do not change their policies until they face bipartisan opposition. Consequently, real change in Iraq will not come until Democrats bring Republicans along on a new policy direction."

The ISG was first created in March 2006 at the request of a bipartisan group of members of Congress and was co-chaired by former Secretary of State James Baker and former chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Lee Hamilton. In December 2006, the ISG released its recommendations and outlined a bipartisan approach to bringing a responsible conclusion to the Iraq war.