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House Approves Troop Redeployment Planning

The House passed legislation requiring President Bush to submit a plan for a withdrawal of troops from Iraq. The bill requires the administration to report to Congress on the status of redeployment plans in 60 days with follow up reports due every 90 days thereafter.



The bipartisan Contingency Planning for Redeployment from Iraq Act, H.R. 3087, passed by a 377 to 46 vote. The bill calls for needed contingency planning by the Pentagon on redeployment and outlines the issues the contingency planning should address. The bill states that it is the sense of Congress that it is necessary and prudent for the Department of Defense to undertake robust and comprehensive contingency planning.

According to the bill, contingency planning for a redeployment of U.S. Armed Forces from Iraq should address:

- Ensuring appropriate protection for the U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq;
- Providing appropriate protection in Iraq for U.S. civilians, contractors, third party nationals, and Iraqi nationals who have assisted the U.S. mission in Iraq;
- Maintaining and enhancing the ability of the U.S. government to eliminate and disrupt Al Qaeda and affiliated terrorist organizations; and
- Preserving military equipment necessary to defend the national security interests of the United States.



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War Zone Contractor Accountability

The House enacted legislation to ensure that all private security contractors in overseas war zones are held accountable for any criminal behavior.



Currently, the U.S. courts only have clear jurisdiction over Department of Defense (DOD) contractors. This bill, H.R. 2740, closes a loophole by giving U.S. federal courts jurisdiction over the actions by contractors working for any U.S. government agency in areas of foreign countries where U.S. military forces are conducting combat operations. Specifically, the measure places all war zone contractors under the jurisdiction established by the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act (MEJA), which currently only covers members of the armed forces, civilian federal employees and DOD contractors.



The U.S. government has a responsibility to hold the individuals carrying out its work to the highest standards of conduct, and to ensure that these individuals protect human life and uphold the law. This responsibility does not disappear simply because such individuals are contractors instead of government employees.

The bill, which passed by a 389 to 30 vote, designates the Department of Justice (DOJ) as the lead agency for investigating contractor behavior. Under the bill, an FBI investigative unit will be formed for each war zone. The FBI unit will investigate any allegations of criminal misconduct by contractors, including reports of fatalities from the use of force by a contractor, and would then refer cases that warrant further action to the U.S. Attorney General.

The bill also requires the DOJ Inspector General to provide Congress with a report on the identification and prosecution of alleged overseas war zone contractor abuses. This requirement is intended to address the DOJ's apparent failure to aggressively investigate and prosecute crimes committed by contractors over which the department already has jurisdiction.



Improving Watchdog's Accountability and Effectiveness

The House approved legislation aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and independence of Inspectors General.

Inspectors General play a vital watchdog role for the U.S. taxpayer working to prevent and detect waste, fraud and abuse in federal programs. Inspectors General serve as the principal watchdogs of the nation's major federal agencies and are responsible for conducting audits and investigations to prevent and detect waste, fraud and abuse. In 2006 alone, audits by Inspectors General resulted in potential savings of \$9.9 billion and criminal recoveries totaling \$6.8 billion.

To effectively carry out their mission, Inspectors General must be independent and objective. This requires that they be insulated from improper management and political pressure. The Improving Government Accountability Act, H.R. 928, takes several steps to enhance the effectiveness and independence of Inspectors General.

First, the bill gives Inspectors General fixed seven-year terms to better insulate Inspectors General from political retribution. Second, Inspectors General, who now serve at the pleasure of their appointing authorities, could be terminated before the end of their terms only for cause, based on such factors as malfeasance, permanent disability, inefficiency, neglect of duty, or conviction of a felony. Third, the bill authorizes Inspectors General to send copies of their budget requests to Congress and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directly, to deter officials in their respective agencies from slashing funding in retaliation for unfavorable audits.

In addition to ensuring that Inspectors General have the appropriate independence, it is also important to ensure that Inspectors General themselves are held accountable. For example, recent concerns have been raised about the conduct of the Inspector General at the State Department.

As a result, the bill also contains provisions to enhance the accountability of the Inspector General system overall. The bill contains provisions to better hold Inspectors General accountable and to provide a mechanism for investigating and resolving allegations of misconduct on the part of the Inspectors General. For example, the bill creates an Inspectors General Council and requires the Council to appoint an Integrity Committee, chaired by the Council's FBI representative. This Integrity Committee shall investigate any allegations of wrongdoing made against Inspectors General or their senior staff members and shall report substantiated allegations to the executive branch. Reports of Integrity Committee investigations must be submitted to both the Executive Chairperson of the Council and to Congress.

The bill passed by a 404 to 11 vote.

House Responds to Subprime Mortgage Crisis

The House continued its response to the subprime mortgage crisis by eliminating an unfair tax on phantom income that occurs when a lender forgives some part of a families' mortgage in foreclosure.



Under current law, the debt forgiven following mortgage foreclosure or renegotiation is considered income for tax purposes, resulting in tax liability for individuals and families. The bill provides tax relief by permanently excluding this type of forgiven mortgage debt from taxes. The bill limits tax relief to situations where the debt is forgiven because of a decrease in home value or because of the financial hardship on the borrower. The bipartisan Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act, H.R. 3648, passed the House by a 386 to 27 vote.

The bill also extends the tax deduction for mortgage insurance – which insures the homeowner against default on their mortgage -- for seven years through the end of 2014.



Problems in the subprime mortgage markets have helped push the housing market into its worst slump in 16 years. Sales of existing homes fell in August to a five-year low, new-homes sales tumbled to the lowest level in seven years, inventories of unsold single-family homes rose to an 18-year high, and home prices suffered the biggest drop in nearly 37 years.

A record 240,000 foreclosure filings were reported in August--more than double a year ago--signaling that many homeowners are increasingly unable to make timely mortgage payments or sell their homes. Some 2 million Americans will see their mortgage payments jump over the next two years, because of an increase in adjustable-rate mortgages after introductory teaser rates.

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. It is a time to remember loved ones lost and to recommit ourselves to advancing prevention, improving treatments, and funding research that can save women's lives and, one day, defeat this devastating disease.

One of the primary goals of National Breast Cancer Awareness month is early detection. Since the start of the awareness program in 1985, mammography rates have more than doubled for women 50 years of age and older. As a result, breast cancer deaths have been on the decline. These are exciting numbers, but there are still thousands of women who do not take advantage of early detection and others who do not get screening mammograms or clinical breast exams at regular intervals.



In 2007, over 40,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. However, the National Breast Cancer Awareness organization states that if all women over the age of 40 take advantage of early detection methods, breast cancer death rates among these women could drop up to 30 percent.

As we observe National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we mourn the mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends who have lost their lives. In their memory, we rededicate ourselves to saving women's lives by encouraging screening and by improving access to timely treatment. Together, we can defeat breast cancer.



It is important for women and their families to know the facts about breast cancer and the best methods for early detection and prevention. National Breast Cancer Awareness month's website, www.nbcam.org, has a host of resources available to women and their families, including a list of [Questions to Ask Your Doctor](#), general [Breast Cancer Q&A](#), a list of [breast cancer diagnosis and treatment centers](#), information on [early detection](#), and a list of other helpful [free resources](#). For additional cancer statistics, visit www.cancer.gov.

Preparing Seniors for Digital Television Transition

This week I joined colleagues in introducing legislation that would help ensure that seniors understand the changes related to the transition to digital television.

On February 17, 2009, television stations will cease broadcasting their analog signals, at which point analog televisions will stop working unless they are connected to a converter, cable or satellite.

The Preparing America's Seniors for the Digital Television Transition Act of 2007 would formalize a partnership between the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), National Telecommunications and

Administration on Aging (AoA) to craft a national consumer education campaign targeting older individuals who depend on analog TV.

Seniors are particularly vulnerable to slipping through the cracks of the transition. Not only are they more likely to rely on free over-the-air analog TV signals, but for many seniors, television is a vital link to the outside world. Without adequate planning and coordination, many seniors could literally be left in the dark.



This legislation would establish a grant program to support non-profits and state and local government agencies to help seniors and other vulnerable populations navigate the transition and the coupon program, which was created by NTIA to help subsidize the cost of a converter box for analog televisions.

The legislation also modifies the coupon program to ensure that households relying solely on over-the-air television sets are prioritized and that residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities are eligible to participate. Additionally, the bill would set requirements for the broadcasting industry, electronic manufacturers, and electronic retailers which include mandatory public service announcements; placement of easily identifiable labels on coupon-eligible converter boxes; and the maintenance of toll-free phone lines to help individuals with converter box installation.



Finally, the legislation would set specific reporting requirements for both the NTIA and FCC in order to monitor the overall progress of the transition and the implementation of the coupon program.

A study conducted by the Association for Public Television Stations (APTS) found that 61% of over-the-air households have “no idea” that digital television transition is taking place. A later study commissioned by APTS found that Americans aged 65 and older are consistently more likely to receive television signals via an over-the-air antenna than younger Americans, and are therefore less prepared to transition from analog to digital-only television. The study concluded that seniors should receive unique attention in efforts to educate the public about the impending digital television transition.



President Vetoes Bipartisan Children's Health Insurance

This week President Bush vetoed bipartisan legislation that would have provided 10 million American children with health coverage.



No child should ever go without medical care, and this legislation would move our country closer to ensuring that every American child has access to affordable, high-quality health care.

Since it was created in 1997, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) has always received strong bipartisan support. SCHIP was created to provide health care coverage for children in families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to afford private insurance.



This bipartisan bill renews and improves SCHIP, ensuring health care coverage for 10 million children – preserving coverage for 6 million children currently covered by SCHIP and extending coverage to nearly 4 million uninsured children. In North Carolina, SCHIP currently ensures that 196,181 receive health insurance. The legislation would extend health care coverage to an additional 116,000 uninsured children.

Two-thirds of uninsured children are currently eligible for SCHIP or Medicaid. This bill simply gives states the resources and incentives to enroll children who are eligible but not signed up for SCHIP and Medicaid.

The vote on overriding the bipartisan SCHIP veto will occur on October 18th. Over the next two weeks, bipartisan supporters of the bill will lead a nationwide effort to try to ensure that Americans' voices are heard and that the veto is successfully overridden.

House Approves Honor for Goldsboro's Philip A. Baddour, Sr.

The House unanimously approved legislation naming Goldsboro's Post Office in honor of former City Councilman Philip A. Baddour, Sr.

Last month, I offered legislation naming Goldsboro's main Post Office at 200 North William Street. It is a fitting honor for someone who gave so much of himself to the community. The legislation has been co-sponsored by the entire North Carolina U.S. House delegation. The legislation now goes to the Senate, and I expect approval by year's end.

Baddour was a downtown merchant for over 30 years and he served on the Goldsboro City Council from 1979 until 1995. Upon his retirement from the City Council, Baddour was honored with a key to the city of Goldsboro and a resolution from the North Carolina League of Municipalities for his years of public service. Then-Gov. James Hunt also honored Baddour as a recipient of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine.



Baddour served as director of Wayside Fellowship and was the recipient of the Cancer Society's Outstanding Crusade Volunteer Award. He was also active in the Cub Scouts and the Boy Scouts of America. He was a lifelong member of the St. Mary Roman Catholic Church and served as chairman of the Parish Council.

Baddour passed away in 2002.

I made the following remarks on the House Floor today before the measure was approved:

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to celebrate and commend the life of a great civic leader and elected official, Mr. Philip A. Baddour, Sr. by naming the United States Post Office located on William Street in Goldsboro, North Carolina as the Phillip A. Baddour, Sr. Post Office. Mr. Baddour was a City Councilman for 16 years in Goldsboro and was a civic leader for long after. This high honor is a fitting tribute to this late cornerstone of the community.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Baddour was a downtown merchant for over 30 years and served on the Goldsboro City Council from 1979 until 1995. During his tenure on the Council, he served as Mayor Pro Tempore and was instrumental in improving the lives of the citizens of Goldsboro. He was known as the "People's Representative" because of his ability to listen and understand the concerns of his constituents, and because he always stood up for those who didn't have a voice.

Upon his retirement from the City Council, Mr. Baddour was honored with a key to the City of Goldsboro and a resolution from the North Carolina League of Municipalities for his years of public service. Former North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt honored him as a recipient of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine – an honor for individuals who have a proven record of extraordinary service to the State. It is the highest civilian honor that can be granted in my home state of North Carolina.

REPRESENTING NORTH CAROLINA'S FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Mr. Baddour dedicated his time and was very compassionate about the community that had given him so much in his youth.

He served as director of Wayside Fellowship and was the recipient of the Cancer Society's Outstanding Crusade Volunteer Award. He was also active in the Cub Scouts and the Boy Scouts of America. He was a lifelong member of the St. Mary Roman Catholic Church and served as chairman of the Parish Council. He was also a member of the Knights of Columbus.



Nothing was more important to Philip Baddour than his family. He was married to Louise Farfour for 60 years. Together they



raised four sons who have followed in their father's footsteps by being community leaders and outstanding citizens: Philip Jr. is an Attorney in Goldsboro, Richard is the Athletic Director at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Stephen is a retired public school teacher, and Neil is a real estate broker. Philip Baddour also had eight grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

Sadly, Mr. Baddour passed away in April 2002 after giving so much to his community, his state, and his country.

Mr. Speaker, I can think of no finer individual and no person who is more deserving of this honor than Mr. Philip A. Baddour, Sr. The people of Goldsboro and the First Congressional District of North Carolina are grateful for his commitment to community and his great leadership. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this great public servant by passing H.R. 3382.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.